

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1876.

EDINA.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAUREL COTTAGE.

A COTTAGE. A roomy cottage in a small by-road amid the environs of Kennington, bordering on South Lambeth. Frost and snow on the ground outside, and biting blasts in the air : inside, sitting round the scanty fire in a bare-looking but not very small parlour, Mrs. Raynor, Edina, and the younger children, the two former busily employed making brown chenille nets for the hair.

When Edina was out one day looking about for some abode for them, this dwelling fell under her eye. It was called Laurel Cottage, as some white letters on the slate-coloured wooden gate testified : probably because a dwarf laurel-tree flourished between the palings and the window. Hanging in the window was a card, setting forth that "lodgings" were to be let : and Edina entered. Could the Raynors have gone away into the country, she would have liked to take a whole cottage to themselves : but then there would have been a difficulty about furniture. It was necessary they should stay in London, as Charles still expected to get employment there, and they must not be too far off the business parts of it, for he would have to walk to and fro night and morning. Laurel Cottage had a landlady, one Mrs. Fox, and a young boy, her son, in it. The rooms to let were four : parlour, kitchen, and two bedrooms. She asked ten shillings per week : but that the house was shabby inside and poorly furnished, she might have asked more. Edina said freely she could afford to give only eight shillings per week ; and at length the bargain was struck. Edina's income was just one

pound per week, fifty-two pounds a year; eight shillings out of it for rent was a formidable sum. It left but twelve shillings for all necessities; and poor anxious Edina, who had all the care and responsibility on her own shoulders, and felt that she had it, did not see the future very clearly before her: but at present there was nothing to be done, save bow to circumstances. So here they were in Laurel Cottage, with a dull, dreary look-out of waste ground for a view, and some stunted trees overshadowing the gate.

Alice had gone into a school as teacher. It was situated near Richmond, in Surry, and was chiefly for the reception of children whose parents were in India. She would have to stay during the holidays: but that was so much the better, as there was no place for her at home. Alfred ran on errands, and made a show of saying his lessons to his mother between whiles. Mrs. Raynor taught Kate and little Robert; Edina did the work, for they were not waited on; Charles spent his time tramping about after a situation. To eke out the narrow income, Edina had tried to get some sewing, or other work, to do; she had found out a City house that dealt largely in ladies' hair nets, and the house agreed to supply her with some to make. All their spare time she and Mrs. Raynor devoted to these nets; Charles carrying the parcels backwards and forwards. But for those nets, they must certainly have been three parts starved. With the nets they were not much better.

In some mysterious way, Edina had managed to provide them all with a change of clothing, to replace some that had been burnt. They never knew how she did it. Only Edina herself knew that. A few articles of plate that had been her father's; a few ornaments of her own: these were turned into money.

The light of the wintry afternoon was fading apace; the icicles outside were growing less clear to the eye. Little Robert, sitting on the floor, said at last that he could not see his picture-book. Mrs. Raynor, looking young still in her widow's cap, let fall the net on her lap for a minute's rest, and looked at the fire through her tears. Over and over again did these tears rise unbidden now. Edina, neat and nice-looking as ever, in her soft black dress, her brown hair smoothly braided on either side her attractive face—attractive in its intelligence, its goodness—caught sight of the tears from the low chair where she sat opposite.

"Take courage, Mary," she gently said. "Things will take a turn sometime."

Mrs. Raynor caught up her work and a sob together. Katie, in a grumbling tone, said she was sure it must be tea-time. They had had only potatoes for dinner so the child was hungry. Edina rose, brought in a tray from the kitchen, which was on the same floor as the room they sat in, and began to put out the cups and saucers.

"What a time Alfred is!" cried the little girl.

Alfred came in almost as she spoke, a can of milk in his hand. By sending to a dairy half a mile off, Edina had discovered that she could get unadulterated skimmed milk cheaper than any left by the milkman; so Alfred went for it morning and night.

"It is so jolly hard!" exclaimed he, with a glowing face, alluding to the ice in the roads. "The slides are beautiful."

"Don't you get sliding when you have the milk in your hand," advised Edina. "Take off your cap and comforter, lad. The bread's ready."

She was cutting some slices of bread for him to toast. Unused to hard fare, the children could not yet get into eating dry bread with any relish: so, when there was nothing to put upon it, neither butter, nor dripping, nor treacle, Edina had the bread toasted. They eat that readily. Alfred knelt down before the parlour fire—the only fire they had—and began to toast. The kettle was singing on the hob. Edina turned the milk out of the can into a jug.

They were sitting down to the tea table when Charles came in. A glance at his weary and dispirited face told Edina that he had met with no more luck this day than usual. Putting aside a brown paper parcel that he carried, containing a fresh supply of material to be made into nets, he took his place at the table. How hungry he was, how sick from want of food, no one but himself knew. And how poor the food was that he could be supplied with!

But for the later experience of his life, Charles could not have believed that it was so difficult for a young man to obtain a situation in London. Edina, less hopeful than he, would not have believed it. Charles Raynor had not been brought up to work of any kind, had never done any; and this seemed to be one of the stumbling-blocks in the way of his success. Perhaps he looked too much of a gentleman; perhaps his refined manners and tones told against him in the eyes of men of business, testifying that he might prove unfit for work: at any rate, he had not found anyone to take him. Another impediment was this: no sooner did a situation fall vacant, than so large a number of applicants made a rush to fill it. Only one of them could be engaged: and it never happened to be Charles. Charles got a sight of the *Times* advertisements in the morning through the friendliness of a newsvendor near. He would read of a clerk being wanted in some place or another, and away he would go, at the pace of a steam-engine, to present himself. But he invariably found other applicants there before him, and as invariably he seemed not to have the slightest chance.

The disappointment was beginning to tell upon him. There were times when he felt almost mad. His conscience had been awake these last many bitter weeks, and the prolonged strain often seemed more than he could bear. Had it been only himself! Ah then, as it

seemed to Charles Raynor, all would have been easy. He could enlist for a soldier ; he could hire himself to the labourers' emigration society to go out for a term of years to Australia, or to Canada ; he could become a porter at a railway station. These wild thoughts (though perhaps they could not be called wild in his present circumstances) passed through his mind continually : but he had to fling them aside as visionary.

Visionary, because his object was, not to support himself alone, but his family. At least to help to support them. Charles Raynor was sensitive to a degree ; and every morsel he was obliged to eat seemed as though it would choke him, because it lessened the portion of those at home. A man cannot wholly starve : but it often seemed to Charles that he really and truly would prefer to starve, and to bear the painful martyrdom of the process, rather than be a burden upon the straits of his mother and Edina ; straits to which he had reduced them. Sometimes he came home by way of Frank's and took tea there—and Frank, suspecting the truth of matters, took care to add some substantial dish to the bread-and-butter. But Charles, in his delicacy of feeling, would not do this often : the house, in point of fact, was Mr. Max Brown's, not Frank's.

How utterly subdued in spirit his mother had become, Charles did not like to see and note. She kept about, but there could be no mistake that she was both sick and suffering. Oh, if he could but lift her out of this poverty to a home of ease and plenty ! he would say to himself, a whole world of self-reproach at work within him : if this later year or two could be blotted out of time and memory, and they had their modest home again near Bath !

No ; it might not be. The events that time brings must endure in the memory for ever ; our actions in it must remain in the Book of the Recording Angel as facts of the past. The home at Bath had gone ; the one at Eagles' Nest had gone ; the few transient weeks of the school-home had gone : and here they were, hopeless and prospectless, eating hard fare at Laurel Cottage.

They had left off asking him now in an evening how he had fared during the day, and what his luck had been. His answer was ever the same : he had had no luck ; he had done nothing : and it was given with pain so evident and intense, that they refrained in very compassion. On this evening Charles spoke himself of it ; spoke to Edina. The children were in bed. Mrs. Raynor had gone, as usual, to hear them say their prayers, and had not yet come back again.

"I wonder how much longer this is to go on, Edina?"

Edina looked up from her work. "Do you mean your non-success, Charley?"

"As if I could mean anything else!" he rejoined, his tone utterly subdued. "I think of nothing but that, morning, noon, and night."

"It is a long lane that has no turning, Charles. And I don't think patience and perseverance often go unrewarded in the long run. How did you fare to-day?"

"Just as usual. Never got a single chance at all. Look here, Edina—my boots are beginning to wear out."

A rather ominous pause. Charley was stretching out his right foot.

"You have another pair, you know, Charley. These must be mended."

"But I am thinking of the time when neither pair will mend any longer. Edina, I wonder whether life is worth living for?"

"Charley, we cannot see into the future," spoke Edina, pausing for a moment in her work to look at him, a freshly-begun net in her hand. "If we could, we might foresee, even now, how very good and necessary this discipline is for us. It may be, Charley, that you needed it. Take it as a cross that has come direct from God; bear it as well as you are able; do your best in it and trust to Him. Rely upon it that, in His own good time, He will lighten it for you. And He will take care of you until it is lightened."

Charles took up the poker; recollected himself, and put it down again. Fires might not be lavishly stirred now, as they had been at Eagles' Nest. Mrs. Raynor had been obliged to make a rule that no one should touch the fire save herself and Edina.

"It is not for myself I am thus impatient to get a place," resumed Charles. "But for the rest of them, I would go to-morrow and enlist. If I could earn only twenty pounds a year to begin with, it would be a help; better than nothing."

Some two or three months back he had said, If I can only get a hundred a year. What lessons of humility does adversity teach!

"Twenty pounds a year would pay the rent," observed Edina. "I never thought it was so hard to get into something. I supposed that when young men wanted employment they had but to seek it. It does seem wrong, does it not, Charley, that an able and willing young fellow should not be able to work when he wishes?"

"My enlisting would relieve you of myself: and the thought, that it would, is often in my mind," observed Charles. "On the other hand——"

"On the other hand, you had better not think of it," she interposed firmly. "We should not like to see you in the ranks, Charley. A common soldier is——"

"Hush, Edina! Here comes mother."

But luck was dawning for Charley. Only a small slice of luck, it is true; and what, not so very long ago, he would have scorned and scoffed at. Estimating things by his present hopeless condition, it looked fair enough.

One bleak morning, a day or two after the above conversation,

Charles was slowly pacing Fleet Street, wondering where he could go next, what do. A situation, advertised in that morning's paper in flaming colours, had brought him up, post haste. As usual, it turned out a failure: to be successful, the applicant must put down fifty pounds in cash. So, that chance was gone: and there was Charles, uncertain, hungry, miserable.

"Halloa, Raynor! Is it you?"

A young stripling about his own age had run against him. At the first moment Charles did not know him, but recollection flashed on his mind. It was Peter Tanting: a lad who had been a schoolfellow of his in Somersetshire.

"I am going to get my dinner," said Tanting, after a few sentences had passed. "Will you come and take some with me?"

Too thankful for the offer, Charles followed him into the Rainbow. And over the viands they grew confidential. Tanting was in a large printing and publishing establishment close by; his brother Fred was at a solicitor's, nearly out of his articles.

"Fred's ill," observed Peter. "He thinks it must be the fogs of this precious London that affect him; and I think so too. Anyway, he coughs frightfully and has had to give up for a day or two. I went to his office this morning to say he was in bed with a plaster on his chest, and a fine way they were in at hearing it; wanting him to go whether or not. One of their copying clerks has left; and they can't hear of another all in a hurry."

"I wonder whether I should suit them?" spoke Charles on the spur of the moment, a flush rising to his face and a light to his eyes.

"You!" cried Peter Tanting.

And then Charles, encouraged perhaps by the good cheer, told a little of his history to Tanting, and why he must get a situation of some sort that would bring in its returns. Tanting, an open-hearted, country-bred lad, became all eagerness to help him, and offered to introduce him to the solicitors' firm there and then.

"It is near the Temple; almost close by," said he: "Prestleigh and Preen. A good firm: one of the best in London. Let us go at once."

Charles accompanied him to the place. Had he been aware that this same legal firm counted Mr. George Atkinson among its clients, he might have declined to try to enter it. It used to be Callard and Prestleigh. But old Mr. Callard had died very soon after Frank held the interview with him that was told of: now it was Prestleigh and Preen.

Peter Tanting introduced Charles to the managing clerk, Mr. Stroud. Mr. Stroud, a very tall man wearing silver-rimmed spectacles, with iron grey hair and a crabbed sort of manner, put some questions to Charles, and then told him to sit down and wait. Mr. Prestleigh was in his private room; but it would not do to trouble him with these matters:

Mr. Preen was out. Peter Tanting, in his good nature, said all he could in favour of Charles, particularly that "he would be sure to do," and then went away.

Charles sat down on one of the chairs, and passed an hour gazing at the fire and listening to the scratching of pens going on at the desks. People were perpetually passing in and out: the green baize door seemed to be ever on the swing. Some brought messages; some were marshalled to Mr. Prestleigh's room. By-and-by, a youngish gentleman—thirty-five, perhaps—came in, in a warm white over-coat; and, from the attention and seriousness suddenly evinced by the clerks generally, Charles rightly guessed him to be Mr. Preen. He passed through the room without speaking, and was followed by the head clerk.

A few minutes more, and Charles was sent for to Mr. Preen's room. That gentleman—who had a great profusion of light curling hair and a pleasant face and manner—was alone, and standing with his back to the fire near his table. He asked Charles very much the same questions that Mr. Stroud had asked, and particularly what his recent occupation had been. Charles told the truth: that he had not been brought up to any occupation, but that an unfortunate reverse of family circumstances was obliging him to seek one.

"You have not been in a solicitor's office, then! Not been accustomed to the copying of deeds?" cried Mr. Preen.

Charles confessed he had not. But he took the courage to say he had no doubt he could do any copying required of him, and to beg that he might be tried.

"Is your handwriting a neat one?"

"Yes, it is," said Charles eagerly, for he was speaking only truth. "Neat and good, and very plain."

"You think you could copy quickly and correctly?"

"I am sure I could, sir. I *hope* you will try me," he added, a curious wail of entreaty in his tone, that perhaps he was himself unconscious of; but which was nevertheless apparent to Mr. Preen. "I have been seeking after something so long, day after day, week after week, that I have nearly lost heart."

Perhaps that last avowal was not the best aid to Charles's success; or would not have been with most men of business. With Mr. Preen, who was very good-natured, it told rather for than against him. The lawyer mused. They wanted a copying clerk very badly indeed; being two hands short and extremely busy: but the question was, could this young man accomplish the work? A thought struck him.

"Suppose you were to stay now and copy a page this afternoon?" suggested Mr. Preen. "You see, if you cannot do the writing, it would be useless your attempting it: but if you can, we will engage you."

"I shall only be too happy to stay this afternoon, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Preen, ringing his bell for the managing clerk. "And you shall then have an answer."

Charles was put to work by Mr. Stroud : who came and looked at him three or four times while he was doing the copying. He wrote slowly ; the consequence of his super-extra care, his intensely earnest wish to succeed : but his writing was good and clear.

"I shall write quickly in a day or two, when I am used to it," he said, looking up : and there was hope in his face as well as his tone.

Mr. Preen chanced to be standing by. The writing would do, he decided ; and Mr. Stroud was told to engage him. To begin with, his salary was to be fifteen shillings a week : in a short while—as soon, indeed, as his suiting them was an assured fact—it would be raised to eighteen. He was to enter on the morrow.

"Where do you live ?" curtly questioned Mr. Stroud.

"Just beyond Kennington."

"Take care that you are punctual to time. Nine o'clock is the hour for the copying clerks. You are expected to be at work by that time, therefore you must get here before the clock strikes."

A very easy condition, as it seemed to Charles Raynor, in his elation of spirit. A copying clerk in a lawyer's office at fifteen or eighteen shillings a week ! Had anyone told him a year back he would be capable of accepting so degrading a post—as he would then have deemed it—he had surely said the world must have turned itself upside down first. *Now* he went home with a joyous step and elated heart, hardly knowing whether he trod on his head or his heels.

And there, at Laurel Cottage, they held quite a jubilee. Fifteen shillings a week, added to the previous narrow income of twenty, seemed at the moment to look very like riches. Charles had formed all kinds of mental resolutions as he walked home : to treat his clothes tenderly lest they should get shabby ; scarcely to tread on his boots that they might not wear out : and to make his daily dinner on bread and cheese, carried in his pocket from home. Ah, these resolves are good, and more than good ; and generous, wholesome-hearted young fellows are proud to make them in the time of need. But in their inexperience they cannot foresee the long, wearing, depressing struggle that the years must entail, during which the efforts and the privation must be persevered in. And it is well they cannot.

It wanted a quarter to nine in the morning, when Charles entered the office, warm with the speed at which he had walked. He did all that he was put to do, and did it correctly. If Mr. Stroud did not praise, he did not grumble.

When told at one o'clock that he might go to dinner, Charles made his way to the more sheltered parts in the precincts of the Temple, and surreptitiously eat the bread and cheese that he had brought

in his pocket from home. That was eaten long and long before the time had expired, when he would be expected to go in; but he did not like to appear earlier, lest some discerning clerk should decide he had not been to dinner at all. It was frightfully dull and dreary here, the bitterly cold wind whistling against him down the passages and round the corners; so he got into the open streets: they, at least, were lively with busy traversers.

"I must go and see Peter Tanting, to tell him of my success and thank him; for it is to him I owe it," thought Charles, as he quitted the office in the evening. "Let me see! The address was somewhere near Mecklenburgh Square."

Taking out a small note-case, in which the address was noted down, he halted at a street corner while he turned its leaves, and found himself in contact with William Stane. The gas in the streets and shops made it as light as mid-day: no chance had they to pretend not to see each other. A bow, exchanged coldly, and each passed on his way.

"I'll not notice him at all, should we meet again," said Charles to himself. And it might have been that Mr. Stane was saying the same thing. "Now for Doughty Street. I wonder which is the way to it?" deliberated he.

"Does Mr. Tanting live here?" inquired Charles of the young maid-servant, when he had found the right house.

"In the parlour there," replied the girl, pointing to a room on her left.

Without further ceremony, she went away, leaving him to introduce himself. A voice, that he supposed was Peter's, bade him "come in," in answer to his knock.

But he could not see Peter. A young fellow was stretched on the sofa in front of the fire. Charles rightly judged him to be the brother, Frederick Tanting. Young men are not, as a rule, very observant of one another, but Charles was struck with the appearance of the one before him. He was extremely good-looking; with fair hair, all in disorder, that shone like threads of gold in the firelight, glistening blue eyes, and a bright hectic flush on his thin cheeks.

"I beg your pardon," said Charley, as the invalid (for such he evidently was) half rose, and gazed at him. "I came to see Peter."

"Oh, aye; sit down," was the answer, given in a cordial tone, but without much breath. "I expect him in every minute."

"You are Fred," observed Charles. "I daresay he told you of meeting me on Tuesday: Charles Raynor."

"Yes, he did. Do sit down. You don't mind my lying here?"

"Is it a cold you have taken?" asked Charles, bringing forward a chair to the corner of the hearth.

"I suppose so. A fresh cold. You might have heard my breathing yesterday over the way. The doctor kept me in bed. He wanted to

keep me there also to-day; but to have to lie in that back room is so wretchedly dull. Poke up the fire, will you, please, and make a blaze."

With every word he spoke, his chest seemed to heave up and down. His voice was hollow. Now he had a fit of coughing; and the cough sounded as hollow as the voice had done.

Peter came in, welcomed Charles boisterously, and rang for tea. *That*, you may be sure, was acceptable to poor half-starved Charles. Fred, saying he was glad Charles had got the place at Prestleigh's, plunged into a few revelations touching the office politics, as well as his frequent cough and his imperfect breath allowed, with a view of putting him au courant of affairs in general in his new position.

"I shall make things pleasant for you, after I get back," said he. "We article fellows hold ourselves somewhat aloof from the working clerks; but I shall let them know who you are, and that it is only a temporary move on your part."

Fred Tanting, warm-hearted as his brother, said this when Charles was bidding him good evening. That last look, taken when the invalid's face was raised, and the lamp shone full upon it, impressed Charles more than all. Peter went with him to the door.

"What does the doctor say about your brother?" asked Charles, as they stood on the pavement, in the cold

"Says he must take care of himself."

"Don't you think he looks very ill?"

"I don't know," replied Peter, who had been in the habit of seeing his brother daily; and therefore his looks had not particularly impressed him. "Does he?"

"Well, it strikes me so. I should say he *is* ill. Why don't you send for his mother to come up?"

"So I would, if we had a mother to send for," returned Peter. "Our mother died two years ago; and—and father has married again. We have no longer any place in the old Somersetshire homestead, Raynor. Fred and I stand by ourselves in the world."

"And without means?" cried Charles quickly; who had lately begun to refer every evil that the world contained to the lack of money.

"Oh, he allows us something. Just enough to keep us going until we shall be started on our own account. I get a hundred a year from the place I'm at. Fred gains nothing yet. He is not out of his articles."

"Well, I'll come to see him again soon," cried Charley, vaulting off. "Good night, Peter."

Was Fred indeed seriously ill? Was it going to be one of those cases, of which there are too many in London: of a poor young fellow, just entering on the hopeful threshold of life, dying away from friends,

and home, and care? Whether caused by Charles's tone or Charles's words, the shadowy thought, that it might be so, entered for the first time into the mind of Peter.

And Charles never had "things made pleasant for him," at the office, in pursuance of the friendly wish just expressed: the opportunity was not afforded. Exactly twenty days from that evening, he was invited to attend the funeral of Frederick Tanting.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JEALOUSY.

THE shabby room was smartened up for the occasion. At least, as much as a poor room that holds cane-seated chairs, and a threadbare carpet not half covering the boards, can be smartened. It was Mrs. Raynor's birthday. Frank Raynor and his wife had gone to wish her many happy returns of it and to take tea; Alice was invited to come; Charles had said he would be home early. But the tea was over, and neither Charles nor Alice had put in an appearance: and the little fête, wanting them, had seemed like a failure to their mother.

Mrs. Raynor was altered: aged, spiritless, always ailing. Disappointment and poor circumstances told on her health as well as her mind. It was not for herself she grieved and suffered, but for her children. For Charles especially. His prospects had been blighted, his standing in the world utterly changed. Edina had her hands full, for Mrs. Raynor could help but very little now. What Mrs. Raynor chiefly did was to gather the young ones around her, and talk to them in her gentle voice of resignation to God's will, of patience, of that better world that they were travelling on to; where there shall be neither sickness nor sorrow, neither mortification nor suffering. The children needed such lessons: it seemed very hard to them that they should sometimes have to eat dry bread for dinner, or baked potatoes without butter. Even with all Edina's economy and with Charles's earnings, meat could not always be had: the joint must be carved sparingly, and made to last the best part of the week. They generally had a joint on a Sunday: that was as much as could be said. Clothes cost so much; and Charles, at least, had to be well-dressed. As the experienced house-wife knows, there are many items in a family's expenditure besides eating and drinking; and this applies especially to fallen gentlepeople, whose habits have been formed, and who must still in a degree keep up appearances.

If the Raynors had needed discipline, as some of the standers-by at Eagles' Nest had opined, they were certainly enjoying it in a very marked degree. Twelve months had slipped by since they took up their abode at Laurel Cottage, and there had been no change. The days and the weeks had drifted on, one day, one

week after another, in the same routine of thrift, and struggle, and privation. Charles was at Prestleigh and Preen's, working to their satisfaction, and bringing home a sovereign a week as wages : Alice was teaching still in the school at Richmond. Alfred went to a day school. Edina had sought an interview with its principal, and by dint of some magic of her own, when she told him confidentially of their misfortunes, had got him to admit the lad at almost a nominal charge. It was a weary life for them altogether no doubt, requiring constant patience and resignation ; but, as Edina would cheerfully tell them, it might have been worse, and they had many things to be thankful for even yet.

October was passing, and the falling leaves strewed the ground. The afternoon was not sunny, but warm and dull : so sultry, in fact, as to suggest the idea of tempest in the air. In the patch of square garden at the back of the house they had gathered : Frank, his wife, Edina, Mrs. Raynor, and the children : some of them stood about, looking at the bed of herbs that Edina's care had planted ; Mrs. Raynor was sitting on the narrow bench underneath the high window. For this garden had to be descended to by several steps ; and as you stood in it the back parlour window (Mrs. Raynor's bedroom) looked perched up aloft.

"Herbs are so useful," remarked Edina, in answer to their praise of the bed. "When a stew is poor in itself, thyme or mint will give a flavour to it. Do you, remember, Frank?—poor papa liked thyme in the Irish stews."

"And very good the Irish stews used to be," said Frank. "Eve calls them ragouts. I often tell her they are not as tasty as those I had at Trennach. Remember, Daisy, it is thyme Eve's ragouts want."

Daisy, playing with little Robert, turned round with dancing eyes. She was as pretty as ever, in spite of the distasteful existence in Lambeth. And she had dressed herself for this occasion in one of her old grand silks.

"I'll try and remember, Frank," she said with a laugh. "I hope I shall not say rue instead. Whatever did you plant this great bush of rue for, Edina?"

"That bush is the landlady's ; it was here when we came," replied Edina. "Mrs. Fox hangs some of it at the foot of her bed, to keep the insects off."

When Mr. Max Brown departed for the West Indies, he had thought the very utmost extent of his term of absence would be less than six months. But nearly three sixes had elapsed, and he had not returned. Apparently he liked the life there ; apparently he was quite satisfied with Frank's management of his practice at home. In writing to Frank, he put the delay down to his mother. She was dying, but very slowly : that is, her complaint was one for which there is no cure : and

she wanted to keep him with her to the end. Thus Max wrote, and it was the only plea of excuse he gave for his prolonged stay. Frank could not help thinking there was some mystery about it; but he was quite content to remain at his post. It was very rare indeed that he could get an hour or two's recreation, such as this. The practice was an exacting one, and he had no assistant.

"That's the postman's knock!" cried out Kate.

The postman was not a frequent visitor at Laurel Cottage. When he did bring a letter, it was always for the Raynors: Mrs. Fox never had one at all, and never seemed to expect one. Kate ran to the door, and brought back the letter. It proved to be from Alice: stating why she was not able to come.

"Daisy, my darling, you must put your bonnet on," whispered Frank. "I want to get home before dark: I have been away now longer than I care to be."

"I should let the practice go to York for one evening," cried Alfred, who chanced to overhear the words.

"No doubt you would," laughed Frank.

"Well, Frank, I'm sure you seem to set that precious practice up above everything. One would think it was an idol, with a golden body and diamond wings."

"And so I ought to set it above everything, Master Alfred. A steward must do his duty."

Daisy went indoors unnoticed. She was feeling tired, wanted to be at home herself, and began settling on her bonnet before the glass at the window of the crowded back room. Two beds were in the chamber, besides other furniture: in one of which slept Mrs. Raynor and Kate, in the smaller one Edina. What a change it all was for them! Suddenly, while Daisy's attention was still given to her bonnet, certain words, spoken by Edina, broke upon her ear. She and Frank had sat down on the bench below the window, and were talking of Trennach. Mrs. Raynor and the children were at the end of the garden, bending together over the untidy path, as if seeking to determine what kind of coarse gravel it might be composed of.

"Do you ever hear anything of Mrs. Bell, Frank?"

"I saw her to-day," was Frank's unexpected answer. "Saw her yesterday as well."

"Where did you see her? Is she in London?" quickly repeated Edina.

"They have come to live in London. She and Rosalin

"What has caused them to do that?" continued Edina quite sharply, as if she did not altogether approve of the information. Daisy's fingers, tying her bonnet strings, could not have dropped more suddenly had they been seized with paralysis.

"I'm sure I don't know. They have come into money, through the

death of some relative at Falmouth, and thought, I believe, that they would like to live in London. Poor Mrs. Bell is worse than she used to be : the complaint, feared for her, is making progress—and must make it until the end. I am attending her.”

“They live near you, then?”

“Close by.”

There ensued a short silence. Edina was probably busy with thought. She spoke again.

“Is Rosaline as pretty as ever?”

“Not quite so pretty, perhaps : more beautiful.”

“Ah well—I would not go there too much, Frank ; illness, or no illness,” cried Edina.

She spoke in a dreamy tone, as if her reflections were back in the past. In her heart she believed he must have cared more or less for Rosaline. Frank laughed slightly in answer : a laugh that had some constraint in its tone. His thoughts also had gone back ; back to that fatal night at Trennach.

A sudden shout in Alfred's voice from the group in the garden. “Here it is ! here it is, mamma !” Mrs. Raynor's thin gold ring had slipped off her slender finger, and they had been searching for it in the twilight.

Daisy seemed to see and hear no more until some of them came running into the bedroom, saying that Frank was waiting for her. She went out, said good night in a mechanical sort of manner, and they started, arm-in-arm, for home. The old jealousy she had once felt of Rosaline Bell had sprung up again now with tenfold force.

What a strange passion it is, this jealousy ! None other, that the world knows of, is so utterly unamenable to reason. Let it once take possession of the heart of man and it fools him to the top of its bent. Light appears dark, and dark light ; shadows, that no other eye can see, become rocks of substance, hard as adamant.

A short distance from the cottage, they met Charles. He was walking along at a strapping pace, and greeted them in a commotion of anger.

“It was an awful shame ! Just because I wanted to get home an hour earlier than usual, it is an hour later. The office is full of work, and some of us had to stay behind and do it.”

“Never mind, Charley,” said Frank, with his genial smile. “Better luck next time.”

“Yes, it's all very well to say next time : that will be next year, I suppose. You hardly ever come to us, you know, Frank.”

“I come when I can. You must come to us instead. Spend next Sunday with us, Charley. I can't stay talking now.”

“All right,” said Charley, vaulting off. “Good night to you both.” And neither of them had noticed that Daisy had not spoken.

Daisy was tormenting herself in a most unnecessary manner. Rosaline Bell in London ! Living near to them : *close* to them, he had said. He had seen her to-day, and yesterday as well : no doubt he saw her every day. No doubt he loved her, that Rosaline !—and had thrown off all affection for herself, his wife. What a frightful thing it was !—and how far had it gone ?—and what would it end in ?

After this, the ordinary fashion of a jealous woman, did Mrs. Frank Raynor reason ; believing her fancies to be all as true as gospel. Had some angelic messenger essayed to set her right, it would have availed naught in her present frame of mind. Jealousy is as much a disease as intermittent fever : it may have its lighter intervals, but it must run its course.

"Daisy, I think we shall have a storm !" cried Frank. "How still and hot the air is !—and look at that great black cloud coming up ! We must put our best feet foremost."

Daisy silently acquiesced. And the pace they went at prevented much attempt at talking. So that he had no opportunity of noticing that she had suddenly lost her tongue.

The storm burst forth when they were within a few doors of their own home. Lightning, thunder, a heavy down-pour of rain. As they turned into the surgery, where Sam stood underneath the gas light, his arms flat on the counter, his heels kicking about underneath it, Frank caught up a note that was lying there, addressed to him.

"Who brought this note ?" asked Frank as he read it.

"It was a young lady," replied Sam. "When I told her you were not at home, she asked me for a sheet o' paper and pen and ink, and writ that, and said it were to be gave to you as soon as you came in. And, please, sir, they have been round twice from Tripp's to say the baby's worse."

Frank Raynor went out again at once, in spite of the storm. His wife, who had heard what passed, turned into the parlour, her brain hard at work.

"I wonder how long this has been going on !—how long she has been coming here ?" debated Mrs. Frank, her cold fingers twitching with agitation, her hot head throbbing. "*She* wrote that note—bare-faced thing ! When she found she could not see him, she wrote it, and left it for him : and he is gone out to see her !"

Jealousy in its way is as exciting as wine ; acting very much in the same manner on any patient who is suitably primed for it. Mrs. Frank's blood was surging in her veins ; her thoughts were taking a wild turn ; her shaking fingers could hardly throw her bonnet off. In point of fact, the note concerned a worthy pork butcher, who feared he was sickening for some complaint ; and "the young lady," his daughter, had written it, in preference to leaving a message, begging for Mr. Raynor's speedy attendance.

"Have you had your supper, Sam?" asked Mrs. Frank, from the intervening door.

"No, ma'am."

"Then go and get it."

Sam passed her on his way to the kitchen. She stepped forward to the counter, opened the day-book, and began searching for Dame Bell's address. The street door was usually kept closed now, not open as it used to be; and Daisy went to it on tip-toe, and slipped the bolt. There was nobody to hear her had she stepped ever so heavily: but we are all apt to think that secret transactions require silent movements. Taking up her place behind the counter, she turned the leaves of the book again. But, turn and look as she would, she could not see the address sought for. It is true she was looking in a desperate hurry, standing metaphorically upon spikes and ploughshares. What if Frank were to return suddenly? Or Sam from his supper?

"No, the address is not there!"—shutting the book, and pushing back the pretty hair from her beating temples. "He is too cautious to have entered it. Other patients' names are there, but Dame Bell's is not. The affair is underhanded altogether: clandestine from beginning to end."

And from that night Mrs. Frank Raynor began a course of action that she previously would have believed herself incapable of. She watched her husband. In her eagerness to discover where these Bells lived—though what service the knowledge could render her she would have been at a loss to know had she mentally asked the question—she occasionally followed him. Keeping her bonnet downstairs in readiness, she would put it on hastily when he went out, and steal after him. Three or four times a week she did this. Very contemptible indeed Daisy felt it to be, and her cheeks blazed consciously now and again: but jealousy has driven a woman to do more contemptible things than even this. But for the unsuitability of her present life, as contrasted with her previous tastes and habits and surroundings, and for its utter monotony, causing her to feel weary unto death day after day, Margaret Raynor might never so far have forgotten herself. The pursuit was quite exciting, bringing to her a kind of relief; and she resolutely drove away all inconvenient qualms of conscience.

So, there imagine that you behold them. Frank turning out at the surgery door, and hastening this way or that way, as if his feet were aided by wings: and when he is a few yards off, say just abreast of the oil and pickle shop, Daisy turns out after him. It would be generally a tedious and tormenting chase. He seemed to have so many patients to visit, here, there, and everywhere; on this side the streets and on that side, and round corners, and down courts, that his pursuer was generally baffled, lost him for good, and had to return home in despair.

Meanwhile, as time went on, Frank, unconscious of all this, was

destined to get a shock himself. One evening, when he had been called to a case of emergency near home, upon quitting the sick man's house, he entered a chemist's for the purpose of directing some article, which it was not in the province of a medical man to supply, to be sent to the sufferer. Dashing into the shop hurriedly, for his time was not his own, he was beginning to give his order.

"Will you send——"

And there his speech failed him. He stopped as suddenly and completely as though he had been shot. The young man to whom he was addressing himself, with the attentive red-brown eyes in which gleamed a smile of intelligence, and the clean white apron tied round his waist, was Blase Pellet. They looked at one another in the full glare of the gas-light.

Blase was the first to speak. "How do you do, Mr. Raynor?"

"Is it *you*?" cried Frank, recovering himself somewhat. "Are you living here?"

"Since a week past," replied Blase.

"Why have you left Trennach?"

"I came up to better myself," said Blase demurely. "One hears great things of fortunes being made in London."

"And of being lost, Pellet," rejoined Frank.

"I can go back at any time," observed Blase. "Old Float would be only too glad to have me. The young fellow he has now in my place is not *me*, Float writes me word. Float will have to attend to business a little more himself now, and I expect it will not suit him."

Without any answer to this, Frank gave the order he had gone in to give, and passed out of the shop, his mind in a very disagreeable ferment.

"He has come up here as a spy upon me; he is watching my movements," said Frank to himself. "How did he know I was here—in this part of London?" A positive conviction that it was utterly useless to try to evade Blase Pellet, had taken sudden possession of him; that he had been tracking him all along by the means of spies and emissaries, and had now come to do it in person. He felt that if he were to sail away over the seas and set up his tent in an African desert, or on the arid shores of some remote fastness of the Indian Empire, or amid the unexplored wilds of a barren prairie, he should see Blase Pellet in another tent, side by side with him, the next morning.

For the passing moment, his several pressing engagements had gone out of his head. His patients, lying in expectation of him, might lie: self was all in all. The uneasiness that had taken hold of him amounted to tribulation.

"I wonder what Dame Bell knows of this?" it suddenly occurred to him to think. And no sooner did it occur than, acting on the moment's impulse, he determined to ask her, and walked towards her lodgings at his usual quick rate. She had taken rooms in a quiet

street, where the small houses were mostly private. It was nearly a week since Frank had seen her; for her complaint was very fluctuating, and latterly she had felt better, not requiring regular attendance.

Opening the door without knocking, as was his custom, he went upstairs to the small sitting-room: this room and the bedchamber behind it comprising Mrs. Bell's apartments. She had come into a little money by the death of her sister at Falmouth, John Pellet's wife: and this, combined with her previous slight income, enabled her to live quietly. When Mrs. Pellet died, it had been suggested that Rosaline should take to her millinery business, and carry it on: but Rosaline positively declined. Neither Rosaline nor her mother liked Falmouth, and they resolved to go to London. Chance alone—or at least, that apparently undirected impulse that is called chance—had caused them to fix on this particular part of London for their abode; and neither of them had the slightest idea that it was within a stone's throw of the dwelling-house of Frank Raynor. On the third day after settling in it, Rosaline and Frank had met in Mark Street: and he then learnt the news of their recent movements.

Mrs. Bell was at her old employment this evening when Frank entered—that of knitting. Lifting her eyes to see who had come in, she took the opportunity to snuff the candle by which she sat, and gazed at Frank over her spectacles.

"Hey-day!" she cried. "I thought it was Rosaline."

This was the first time Frank had seen her alone. During all his previous visits Rosaline was present. Rosaline had gone a long way that afternoon, Dame Bell proceeded to explain, as far as Oxford Street, and was not back yet. The girl seemed to have got some crotchet in her head, she added, and would not say what she went for. Frank was glad of her absence—crotchet or no crotchet; he felt an invincible distaste to name the name of Blase Pellet in her hearing.

Seen Blase Pellet to night!—what had Blase Pellet come to town for? repeated Dame Bell, in answer to Frank's introduction of the subject. "Well, sir," she added, "he tells us he was grown sick and tired of Trennach, and came up here to be near us—me and Rose. I'm sure you might have knocked me down with a feather, so surprised was I when he walked into this room last Sunday afternoon. I had dozed off in my chair here, and Rose was reading the Bible to herself, when he came in. For a minute or two I did not believe my eyes, and that's the truth. As to Rose, she turned the colour of chalk, just as if he frightened her."

"Did he know you were living here?"

"Of course he knew that, Mr. Frank. Blase, I must say, has always been as dutiful to me as if he had been my real nephew, and he often wrote to us at Falmouth. One of his letters was sent after us from Falmouth, and I wrote to tell him where we were in return."

"Did you tell him *I* was here?" questioned Frank.

"Well no, I didn't: and it's curious you should ask just that question, Mr. Frank," cried the dame. "I was just going to put in the letter that I hoped I should get better now Mr. Raynor was attending me again, but Rosaline stopped it. Mr. Raynor was nothing to Blase, she said: better not name him at all. Upon that, I asked her why she did not write the letter herself instead of me—for she never will write to him. However, you were not mentioned, sir."

"What is his object in coming to London?" repeated Frank, unable to get the one important point out of his mind.

"I'd not wonder but it's Rosaline," said Dame Bell shrewdly. "Blase has wanted to make up to her this many a day; but——"

"What an idiot the man must be!" struck in Frank.

"But she will not have anything to say to him, I was going to add," concluded Dame Bell. "Why should you call him an idiot, Mr. Frank?"

"He must be one, if he thinks he can persuade Rosaline to like him. See how ugly he is!"

"She might do worse, sir. I don't say Blase is handsome: he is not: but he is steady. If men and women were all chose by their looks, Mr. Frank, a good many would go unmarried. Blase Pellet is putting by money: he will be setting up for himself, some day; and he would make her a good husband."

"Do you tell your daughter that he would?" asked Frank.

"She'll not let me tell her, sir. I say to her sometimes that she seems frightened at hearing the young man's very name mentioned: just as though it would bring her the plague. I know what I think."

"And what is it?" asked Frank.

"Why, that Rosaline pressed upon me this settling up here in London, on purpose to put a wide distance between her and Blase. Falmouth was within his reach, and he now and then came over there. I did not suspect this till last Sunday, Mr. Frank. When tea was over, and Blase had gone, she just sat with her hands before her, looking more dead than alive. 'After all, it seems we had better have stayed at Falmouth,' said she suddenly, as if speaking to herself: and that put the thought upon me, that she had come here to be farther away from him."

Frank made no remark.

"Blase has found a place at a druggist's close by," continued Mrs. Bell: whose tongue, once set going, would not stop readily. "I don't suppose he'll like London as well as Trennach, and so I told him. *I* don't. Great noisy bustling place!"

It seemed that there was nothing more to ask or learn, and Frank bethought himself of his patients. Wishing the old dame good night

he departed. His first visit led him past the druggist's; and his glance, of its own accord, and as though fascinated, turned to the window. There, amid the glow of red and green and blue reflected from the shining globes, he saw the face of Blase Pellet; just as he had used to see it amid the glow of the same varied colours at Trennach.

CHAPTER XXX.

CROPPING UP AGAIN.

"WHY, Daisy! Out marketing, my dear?"

The salutation to Mrs. Frank Raynor came from her husband. One winter's morning, heedless of the extreme cold and the frost that made the streets partially deserted, she followed her husband when he went abroad after breakfast. The dwelling-place of Mrs. Bell and her daughter had become known to her long ago, and three parts of Daisy's days were passed in dodging her husband's footsteps, to see whether they took him to it.

That most unreasoning jealousy, which had seized upon her mind, increased in force. It was growing to be almost a disease. She felt sure, sure as if she had seen it written in letters of fire, that her husband's love had been, was, and would ever be Rosaline Bell's: that it never had been hers: and over and over again she asked herself the question—why had he married her?

It all appeared so plain to Daisy. Looking back, she could, as she fully believed, trace the past out, in regard to it, bit by bit. First of all, there was the girl's unusual and dangerous beauty; Frank Raynor's attendance at the house on the Bare Plain, under the plea of visiting the mother professionally; and the intimacy that was reported to exist between himself and Rosaline. A great deal more frequently than was good or necessary, Daisy recalled the evening when Frank had been dining at the Mount, and the conversation had turned upon the mysterious disappearance of Bell the miner and on the beauty of his daughter. Frank's signs of agitation—his emotional voice, his flushings from red to white—Daisy had then been entirely unable to comprehend: she had considered them as unaccountable as was the absence of the man of whom they were speaking—Bell. Now the reason was very apparent to her: the emotion had arisen from his love of Rosaline. She remembered, as though it had been but yesterday, the tales brought home by Tabitha, and repeated to herself—that this beautiful daughter of Bell the miner was Frank Raynor's best and only love, and that the girl worshipped the very ground he trod on. It was too late then to be swayed by the information, for the private marriage had taken place in

the church at Trennach. Daisy had hardly known whether to believe the story or not; but it had shaken her. Later, as time went on, and she and her husband moved far away from the scene of events, and Rosaline Bell seemed to have faded out of sight, almost, so far as they were concerned, out of existence, Daisy had suffered herself to forget the doubt and the jealousy. But only to call it up with tenfold force now.

And so, Mrs. Frank Raynor had amused herself, if the word may be applied to any state of mind so painful as was hers, with the pastime of watching her husband. Her steps, as of their own uncontrollable will, would take her to the quiet street in which Dame Bell lived, and she had on one or two rare occasions been rewarded by seeing him pass in or out of the house. Of course she could not be on the watch often. She dared not be. As it was, she knew that Sam's eyes had taken to open with wonder whenever she followed her husband through the surgery, and that the boy's curiosity was much exercised as to the cause. Therefore, as she was unable to make Frank's shadow frequently, and as, with all her expectation, she had been gratified so rarely by seeing what she looked for, she drew the conclusion that fortune did not favour her, and that Frank's times for going were just those when she did not happen to be out herself. An ingenious inference: as all sensible people must allow.

On one of those rare occasions, Frank came out of the house accompanied by Rosaline. They turned the opposite way to where Daisy was standing, but not before she had caught a glimpse of the beautiful face. Where were they going together, she passionately asked herself. The probability was that their coming out together was only incidental; for in a very few minutes Daisy met the girl coming back alone, carrying some rusks, which she had no doubt been out to buy, in a paper-bag. All the more essential was it, thought Daisy, after this little incident, that she should continue to look after her husband.

Daisy was becoming quite an adept at the work, and might have taken service as a lady-detective. Of course the chief care, to be exercised, was to keep herself out of her husband's view. It was not so difficult to do this as it would have been with some husbands; for Frank's time was always so precious, and his movements were in consequence obliged to be so fleet, that he went flying through the streets like a lamp-lighter, never looking to the right or the left. More than once, though, Daisy had been obliged to dart into a doorway; and it was at those times that she especially felt the humiliation of what she was doing.

But, the pitcher that goes too often to the well gets broken at last, we are told. The old proverb was to be exemplified here. On this raw, bitter January day, when of a surety nobody would venture out who could keep in, Daisy came face to face with her husband. She had tracked him to Mrs. Bell's house; fortune for once had so far

favoured her. She saw him make for the quiet street upon first leaving home, skim down it with long strides, and go straight in at the door. Her heart beat as though it would burst its bounds; her pulses coursed on with fever-heat. Nothing in the world can be so good for the doctors as indulged jealousy, for it must inevitably tend to bring on heart disease.

"I wonder how long he will stay?" thought Daisy in her raging anger. "Half an hour, maybe. Of course he does not hurry himself when he goes *there*."

Sauntering onwards with slow steps, some idea in her head of waiting to see how long he did stay, and believing herself to be perfectly safe for some long minutes to come, went Daisy. She longed to cross over the street and so get a sight of the upstairs window. But she did not dare: he might chance to look from it and see her. She knew all about the position of the Bells' rooms, having, in a careless, off-handed manner, questioned Sam, who took out Mrs. Bell's medicine. Abreast of the closed door, her face turned towards it, was Daisy, when—she found herself confronted with her husband. He had come quickly forth, without warning, not having stayed two minutes.

"Why, Daisy! Out marketing, my dear?"

The question was put laughingly. Daisy never did market: she was not much of a housekeeper yet, and the shops in Lambeth did not tempt her to begin. Eve did all that. Had she been committing a crime, she could not have felt more taken to in the unexpected surprise, or more awkward at finding an excuse.

"I—had the headache," she stammered, "and—came out for a little walk."

"But it is too cold for you, Daisy. The wind is in the north-east. I have never felt it keener."

"It won't hurt me," gasped Daisy, believing his appearance of solicitude for her was all put on. She had believed that for some time now. The kinder Frank showed himself, the more she despised him.

"You have been in there to see a patient?" questioned Daisy, hardly knowing and certainly not caring what she did say.

"Yes," replied Frank. "But she is better this morning; so I am off to others who want me worse than she does."

"Is it that Mrs. Bell from Trennach? I saw a bottle of medicine directed to her here one day. Sam was putting it into his basket."

"It is Mrs. Bell. She is worse than she used to be, for the disorder has made progress. And I fear she will get worse day by day now until the last."

"What a hypocrite he is!" thought Daisy. "I daresay there is as much the matter with her as there is with me. Of course he needs some plea of excuse—to be going there for ever to that wretched girl."

"Do you come here pretty often?" went on Daisy, coughing to conceal the spleen in her tone, which she was unable to suppress.

"I shall have to come here oftener in future, I fear," returned Frank, not directly answering the question, of which she took note. Just for these few minutes, he had slackened his pace to hers, and they were walking side by side. "I am glad she is near me: I don't think any stranger would give her the care that I shall give."

"You speak as though you were anxious for her!" resentfully cried Daisy.

"I am more than anxious. I would give half I am worth to be able to cure her."

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed Daisy. "One would think you and these people must hold some bond of union in common."

"And so we do," he answered.

Perhaps the words were spoken incautiously. Daisy, looking quietly up at him, saw that he seemed lost in thought.

"What is it?" she asked in a low tone: her breathing just then seeming to be a little difficult.

"What is what?"

"The bond of union between you and these Bells."

The plain question brought him out of his abstraction. He laughed lightly: laughed, as Daisy thought, and saw, to do away with the impression the words had made; and answered carelessly:

"The bond between me and Dame Bell? Because I knew her at Trennach, Daisy, and learnt to respect her. She nursed me through a fever once."

"Oh," said Daisy, turning her head away, indignant at what she believed was an evasion. The "bond," if there was any, existed, not between him and the mother, but between him and the daughter.

"I daresay you attend them for nothing!"

"Of course I do."

"What would Mr. Max Brown say to that?"

"What he pleased. Max Brown is not a man to object, Daisy."

"You can't tell."

"Yes, I can. If he did, I should pay him the cost of the medicines. And my time, at least, I can give."

Daisy said no more. Swelling with resentment, with jealousy, she walked by his side in silence. Frank saw her to the surgery door, and then turned back, on the run. She went in; passed Sam, who was leisurely dusting the counter, and sat down in the parlour by the fire.

Her state of mind was not to be envied. Jealousy, you know, makes the food it feeds on. Mrs. Frank Raynor was making very disagreeable food for herself, indeed. She gave the reins to her imagination, and it presented her with all kinds of suggestive horrors. The

worst was that she did not, and could not, regard these pictured fancies as possible delusions, emanating from her own brain, and to be received cautiously; but she converted them into undoubted facts. The sounds from the surgery of Sam's movements, with his answers to applicants who came in, penetrated to her, through the half open door; but, though they touched her ear in a degree, they did not touch her senses. She was as one who heard not.

Thus she sat on, until mid-day, indulging these visions to their full bent, and utterly miserable. At least, perhaps not quite utterly so; for when people are in the state of angry rage that Daisy was, they cannot feel very acutely: the brunt of distress is thrown off. A few minutes after twelve, Sam appeared. He stared to see his mistress sitting just as she had come in, not even her warm cloth cloak removed, or her bonnet untied.

"A letter for you, please, ma'am. The postman have just brought it in."

Daisy took the letter from him without a word. It proved to be from her sister Charlotte, Mrs. Townley. Mrs. Townley wrote to say that she was back again at the house in Westbourne Terrace, and would be glad to see Daisy. She, with her children, had been making a long visit of several months to her mother at the Mount, and she had but now returned. "I did intend to be back for the New Year," she wrote; "but mamma and Lydia would not hear of it. I have many things to tell you, Daisy: so come to me as soon as you get this note. If your husband will come to dinner—seven o'clock—there will be no difficulty about your getting home. Say that I shall be happy to see him."

Should she go, or should she not? Mrs. Frank Raynor was in so excited a mood as not to care very much what she did. And—if she went, and he did *not* come in the evening, he would no doubt seize on the opportunity of passing it with Rosaline Bell.

She went upstairs, took her things off, and passed into the drawing-room. The fire was burning brightly. Eve was a treasure of a servant, and attended to it carefully. Frank had given orders that a fire should be always lighted there: it was a better room for his wife than the one downstairs, and more cheerful.

Certainly more cheerful: for a greater expanse of the street could be seen, and its busy traversers. The opposite fish-shop displayed its wares more plainly to this room than to the small room below. Just now, Monsieur and Madame, the fish proprietors, were enjoying a wordy war, touching some haddock that Madame had sold under cost price. He had an oyster knife in his hand, and was laying down the law with it. She stood, in her old black bonnet, her wrists turned back on her capacious hips, and defied his anger. Daisy had the pleasure of assisting at the quarrel, as the French say; for the tones

of the disputants were pitched in a loud key, and partially reached her ears.

"What a place this is!" ejaculated Daisy. "What people! Yes, I will go to Charlotte. It is something to get away from them for a few hours, and into civilized life again."

At one o'clock, the hand-bell in the passage below was rung: the signal for dinner. Daisy went down. Frank had only just come in, and was taking off his overcoat.

"I have hardly a minute, Daisy," he said. "I have not seen all my patients yet."

"Been hindering his time with Rosaline," thought Daisy. And she ungraciously took her place at table. Frank, regardless of ceremony, had already cut into the boiled leg of mutton.

"You have *generally* finished before one o'clock," she coldly remarked, as he handed her plate to her. For Eve, good servant though she was, had no idea of staying in the room during meals.

"Yes, generally. But a good many people are ill: and I was hindered this morning by attending to an accident. A little boy was run over in the street."

"Is he much hurt?"

"Not very much. I shall get him all right again."

The dinner proceeded in silence. Frank was eating too fast to have leisure for anything else, Daisy's angry spirit did not permit her to talk. As she laid down her knife and fork, Frank cut her another slice—pressed her to take it when she refused.

"I have said no once. This is my luncheon; not my dinner."

Frank Raynor had become accustomed to hear his wife speak to him in cold, resentful tones: but to-day they sounded especially cold. He had long ago put it down in his own mind to dissatisfaction at their blighted prospects: blighted, at least, in comparison to those they had so sanguinely entertained when wandering together side by side at Trennach and picturing the future. It only made him the more patient, the more tender with her.

"Mrs. Townley has written to ask me to go to her. She is back in Westbourne Terrace. She bids me say she shall be happy to see you to dinner at seven. But I suppose you will not go."

"Yes, I will go," said Frank, rapidly revolving ways and means in his mind, as regarded the exigencies of his patients. "I think I can get away for an hour or two, Daisy. Is it dress?"

"Just as you please," was the frosty answer. "Mrs. Townley says nothing about dress; she would be hardly likely to say it; but she is accustomed to proper ways."

"And how shall you go, my dear?" resumed Frank, passing over the implication with his usual sweetness of temper. "You had better have a cab."

"I intend to have one," said Daisy.

She bedecked herself in some of her smartest things, for the spirit of bravado was upon her: if her husband did not choose to dress, *she* should: and set off in a cab for Westbourne Terrace. Once there, she put away her troubles; in manner at any rate: and her sister never suspected that anything was amiss.

"I shall give you a surprise, Daisy," said Mrs. Townley to her in the course of the afternoon. "An old beau of yours is coming to dinner."

"An old beau of mine! Who is that?"

"Sir Paul Trellasis."

"What an idea!" cried Daisy. "*He* a beau of mine! Mamma must have put that into your head, Charlotte. Sir Paul came to the Mount once or twice; and as he was a bachelor, mamma at once jumped to the notion that he must come for Lydia or for me. He married Miss Beauchamp that same year, you know."

"He and his wife are in London, and I asked them to come in to dinner to-day without ceremony," resumed Mrs. Townley. "Had you taken Sir Paul, Daisy, you would not have had to be buried alive amid savages in some unknown region of London."

"No, I should not," replied the miserable wife with stern emphasis.

But another surprise was in store for Daisy. For Mrs. Townley as well. At the dusk hour, a caller was ushered into the drawing-room, and he proved to be the Reverend Mr. Backup. The curate had never quite severed his relations with Trennach. He had taken three months' duty there again this past autumn, when the Rector was once more laid aside by illness. He had then made the acquaintance of Mrs. Townley; and being now in London, had called to see her.

Mrs. Frank Raynor flushed red as a rose when he came in. The sight of him brought back to her memory the old time at Trennach, and its doings, with vivid intensity. She seemed to see herself once more standing with Frank Raynor before him at the altar, when he was making them *One* together, until death should them part. Mr. Backup had lost somewhat of his former sense of nervousness, but he was shy still, and held out his hand to Mrs. Frank Raynor with timidity.

"Ah, I remember—it was you who married Daisy," observed Mrs. Townley. "My mother at first would not forgive you, I believe, Mr. Backup, until she found you did not know it was a stolen match. And how long are you in town for?"

"I am not sure," replied the parson. "I am come up to see about a curacy."

"Well, you must stay and dine with us," returned Mrs. Townley. "Nonsense! You must. I shall not let you go away. Sir

Paul and Lady Trellasis are coming—you know them—and Mr. Raynor."

The curate, perhaps lacking courage to press his refusal, stayed. In due time Sir Paul and his wife arrived; and, as the clock was striking seven, Frank. Dressed.

All this need not have been noticed, for in truth Mrs. Townley and her visitors have little to do with the story, but for something that occurred in the course of the evening. Mrs. Townley was on the music-stool, playing some scientific "morceau" that was crushingly loud and seemed interminable, with Sir Paul at her elbow turning over for her, and Daisy on the other side. Lady Trellasis, a pretty young woman with black hair, sat talking with Mr. Backup on the sofa near the fire; and Frank stood just behind them, looking at photographs. In a moment, when he was least thinking of trouble, certain words spoken by the curate caught his ear.

"Josiah Bell: that was his name. No; the particulars have never been discovered. He was found eventually, as of course you know, and buried in the churchyard at Trennach."

"The affair took great hold on my imagination," observed Lady Trellasis. "I was staying at the Mount with papa and mamma at the time the man was lost. It was a story that seemed to be surrounded with romance. They spoke, I remember, of the daughter, saying she was so beautiful. Papa thought, I recollect, that the poor man must have fallen into some pit or other: and so it proved."

"Yes," said Mr. Backup, "an unprotected pit, so deep as to have gained the appellation amid the miners of the Bottomless Shaft. The mystery of course consisted in how he got in."

"But why should that be a mystery? Did he not fall in?"

"The fact is, that some superstition attaches to the place, and not a single miner, it was said, would have willingly approached it. Bell especially would not go near it: for in that respect he was a notably weak-minded man."

"Then how did he get in?" quickly asked Lady Trellasis.

"There was a suspicion of foul play. That the man was thrown in."

"How very dreadful! Thrown in by whom?"

"I cannot tell you. A faint murmur arose later—as I was told by Mr. Pine—that some one in a superior walk of life was supposed to be implicated: some gentleman. The Rector tried to trace the report to its source, and to ascertain the name of the suspected man; but——"

"And did he?" interrupted the young lady, too eager to wait for the concluding words of Mr. Backup, who was a slow and hesitating speaker.

"No, the Rector could get at nothing: but he says that an un-

comfortable feeling, in regard to it, remains still on his mind. I should not be surprised at the affair cropping up some day again."

The "morceau" came to an end with a last overwhelming crash, and the conversation with it. Frank woke up with a start, to see a man standing before him with a tray and some teacups upon it. He took one of the cups, and drank the scalding tea at a draught, not knowing whether it was hot or cold. The words, which he could not help overhearing, had startled all feeling out of him.

"Is it not time to go Daisy?" he asked presently.

"If you think so," she coldly answered.

"Then will you get your bonnet on, my dear," he said, never noticing the ungracious nature of her reply. After those ominous words, all other words fell on his ear for the moment as though he heard them not.

Not a syllable was exchanged between them as they sat together in the cab, speeding homewards. Frank was too much absorbed in unpleasant thought to speak; Daisy was indulging in resentment. That last sentence of Mr. Backup's, "I should not be surprised at the affair cropping up again," kept surging in his mind. He asked himself whether it was spoken prophetically: and, he also asked, what, if it did crop up, would be the consequences to himself?

"He is thinking of *her*," concluded Daisy, resenting the unusual silence, although she herself by her manner invoked it. And, in good truth, so he was.

Handing Daisy out of the cab when it stopped, Frank opened the surgery door for her, and turned to pay the driver. At that self-same moment some man came strolling slowly along the pavement. He was well wrapped up in a great coat, and seemed to be walking for pleasure.

He looked at the cab, he looked at the open door of the house, he looked at Frank. Not apparently; not by dint of turning his head; but by sidelong glances directed all ways from his eyes.

"Good night, Mr. Raynor," said he at length, as he was passing.

"Good night to you," replied Frank.

And Mr. Blase Pellet sauntered on, enjoying the icicles of the winter night. Frank went in, and barred and bolted his door.

"I wish to heaven it needed nothing but bars and bolts to keep the fellow out!" spoke Frank in his dismay. "How long he will be kept out, I know not. Talk of whether the affair will crop up again!—why it is cropping up. And I have a bitter enemy in Blase Pellet."

(To be continued.)

A N N E.

"WHY, what's the matter with *you*?" cried the Squire.

"Matter enough," responded old Coney, who had come hobbling into our house, and sat down with a groan. "If you had the gout in your great toe, Squire, as I've got it in mine, you'd soon feel what the matter was."

"You have been grunting over that gout for days past, Coney!"

"So I have. It won't go in and it won't come out; it stops there on purpose to torment me with perpetual twinges. I have been over to Timberdale Parsonage this morning, and the walk has pretty nigh done for me."

The Squire laughed. We often did laugh at Coney's gout: which never seemed to be very bad, or to get beyond incipient "twinges."

"Better have stayed at home and nursed your gout than have pranced off to Timberdale."

"But I had to go," said the farmer. "Jacob Lewis sent for me."

Mr. Coney spoke of Parson Lewis, Rector of Timberdale. At this time the parson was on his last legs, going fast to his rest. His mother and old Coney's mother had been first cousins, which accounted for the intimacy between the parsonage and the farm. It was Eastertide, and we were spending it at Crabb Cot.

"Do you remember Thomas Lewis, the doctor?" asked old Coney.

"Remember him! aye, that I do," was the Squire's answer. "What of him?"

"He has been writing to the parson to take a house for him; he and his daughter are coming to live in old England again. Poor Lewis can't look out for one himself, so he has put it upon me. And much I can get about, with this lame foot!"

"A house at Timberdale?"

"Either in the neighbourhood of Timberdale or Crabb, Dr. Lewis writes. I saw his letter. Jacob says there's nothing vacant at Timberdale at all likely to suit. We have been thinking of that little place over here, that the people have just gone out of."

"What little place?"

"Maythorn Bank. 'Twould be quite large enough."

"And it's very pretty," added the Squire. "Thomas Lewis coming back! Wonders will never cease. How he could reconcile himself to stay away all his life, I can't tell. Johnny, lad, he will like to see you. He and your father were as thick as inkle weavers."

"Aye! Ludlow was a good friend to him while he was doing nothing," nodded old Coney. "As to his staying away, I expect he could not

afford to live in England. He has had a legacy left him now, he tells the parson.—What are you asking, Johnny?"

"Did I ever know Dr. Lewis?"

"Not you, lad. Thomas Lewis went abroad ages before you were born, or thought of. Five-and-twenty years he must have been away."

"More than that," said the Squire.

This Thomas Lewis was half-brother to the Rector of Timberdale but was not related to the Coneys. He served his time to a surgeon at Worcester. In those days young men were apprenticed to doctors just as they were to other trades. Young Lewis was steady and clever; but so weak in health that when he was qualified and ought to have set up on his own account, he could not. People were wondering what would become of him, for he had no money, when by one of those good chances that rarely fail in time of need, he got a post as travelling companion to a nobleman, rich and sickly, who was going to reside in the warmth of the south of France. They went. It brought up Thomas Lewis's health well; made quite another man of him; and when, a little later, his patron died, he found that he had taken care of his future. He had left the young surgeon a competency of two hundred a year. Mr. Lewis stayed on where he was, married a lady who had some small means, took a foreign medical degree to become Dr. Lewis, and obtained a little practice amidst the English that went to the place in winter. They had been obliged to live frugally, though an income of from two to three hundred a year goes farther over the water than it does in England: and perhaps the lack of means to travel had kept Dr. Lewis from visiting his native land. Very little had been known of him at home; the letters interchanged by him and the parson were few and far between. Now, it appeared, the doctor had again dropped into a legacy of a few hundred pounds, and was coming back with his daughter—an only child. The wife was dead.

Maythorn Bank, the pretty little place spoken of by Mr. Coney, was taken. It belonged to Sir Robert Tenby. A small, red-brick house, standing in a flower garden, with a delightful view from its windows of the charming Worcestershire scenery and the Malvern Hills in the distance. Excepting old Coney's great rambling farm homestead close by, it was the nearest house to our own. But the inside, when it came to be looked at, was found to be in a state of dilapidation, not at all fit for a gentleman's habitation. Sir Robert Tenby was applied to, and he gave directions that it should be put in order.

Before this was completed, the Rector of Timberdale died. He had been suffering from ailments and sorrow for a long while, and in the sweet spring season, the season that he had loved above all other seasons, when the May birds were singing and the May flowers were blooming, he crossed the river that divides us from the eternal shores.

Mr. Coney had to see to the new house then upon his own respon-

sibility; and when it was finished and the workmen were gone out of it, he went over to Worcester, following Dr. Lewis's request, and ordered in a sufficiency of plain furniture. By the middle of June all was ready, a maid-servant engaged, and the doctor and his daughter were at liberty to come when they pleased.

We had just got home for the Midsummer holidays when they arrived. Old Coney took me to the station to meet them; he said there might be parcels to carry. Once, a French lady had come on a visit to the farm, and she brought with her fifteen small hand packages and a bandbox.

"And these people are French too, you see, Johnny," reasoned old Coney. "Lewis can't be called anything better, and the girl was born there. Can't even speak English, perhaps. I'm sure he has had time to forget his native tongue."

But they spoke English just as readily and fluently as we did; even the young lady, Anne, had not the slightest foreign accent. And there were no small packages, nothing but three huge trunks and a sort of large reticule, which she carried herself, and would not give up to me. I liked her looks the moment I saw her. You know I always take likes or dislikes. A rather tall girl, light and graceful, with a candid face, a true and sweet voice, and large brown eyes that met mine frankly and fearlessly.

But the doctor! He was like a shadow. A tall man with stooping shoulders; handsome, thin features, hollow cheeks, and scanty hair. But every look and movement bespoke the gentleman; every tone of his low voice was full of considerate courtesy.

"What a poor weak fellow!" lamented old Coney aside to me. "It's just the Thomas Lewis of the years gone by; no health, no stamina. I'm afraid he is only come home to die."

They liked the house, and liked everything in it; and he thanked old Coney very earnestly for the trouble he had taken. I never saw a man, as I learnt later, so considerate for the feelings of others, or so grateful for any little service rendered to himself.

"It is delightful," said Miss Lewis, smiling at me. "I shall call it our little château. And those hills in the distance are the beautiful Malvern Hills that my father has so often told me of!"

"How well you speak English!" I said. "Just as we do."

"Do you suppose I could do otherwise, when my father and my mother were English? It is in truth my native tongue. I think I know England better than France, I have always heard so much of it."

"But you speak French as a native?"

"Oh, of course. German also."

"Ah, I see you are an accomplished lady, Miss Lewis."

"I am just the opposite," she said, with a laugh. "I never learnt accomplishments. I do not play; I do not sing; I do not draw; I do

not—but yes, I can dance : everybody dances in France. Ours was not a rich home, and my dear mother brought me up to be useful in it. I can make my own clothes ; I can cook you an omelette, or ——”

“ Anne, this is Mr. Todhetly,” interrupted her father.

The Squire had come in through the open glass doors, round which the jessamine was blooming. When they had talked a bit, he took me up to Dr. Lewis.

“ Has Coney told you who he is ? William Ludlow’s son. You remember *him* ? ”

“ Remember William Ludlow ! I must forget myself before I could forget him,” was the doctor’s answer, as he took both my hands in his and held me before him to look into my eyes. The tears were rising in his own.

“ A pleasant face to look at,” he was pleased to say. “ But they did not name him William ? ”

“ No ; we call him Johnny.”

“ One generation passes away and another springs up in its place. How few, how few of those I knew are now left to welcome me ! Even poor Jacob has not stayed.”

Tears seemed to be the fashion just then. I turned away when released and saw them in Miss Lewis’s eyes as she stood against the window-sill, absently playing with the white-flowered jessamine.

“ When they begin to speak of those who are gone, it always puts me in mind of mamma,” she said, in a whisper, as if she would apologise to me for the tears. “ I can’t help it.”

“ Is it long since you lost her ? ”

“ Nearly two years ; and home has not been the same to papa since. I do my best ; but I am not my mother. I think it was that which made papa resolve to come to England when he found he could afford it. Home is but trying, you see, when the dearest one it contained has gone out of it.”

It struck me that the house could not have had one dearer in it than Anne. She was years and years older than I, but I began to wish she was my sister.

And her manners to the servant were so nice—a homely country girl, named Sally, engaged by Mr. Coney. Miss Lewis told the girl that she hoped she would be happy in her new place, and that she would help her when there was much work to do. Altogether Anne Lewis was a perfect contrast to the fashionable damsels of that day, who could not make themselves out to appear too fine.

The next day was Sunday. We had just finished breakfast, and Mrs. Todhetley was nursing her toothache, when Dr. Lewis came in, looking more shadowy than ever in his black Sunday clothes, with the deep band on his hat. They were going to service at Timberdale, and he wanted me to go with them.

"Of course I have not forgotten the way to Timberdale," said he ; "but there's an odd, shy feeling upon me of not liking to walk about the old place by myself. Anne is strange to it also. We shall soon get used to it, I daresay. Will you go, Johnny?"

"Yes, sir."

"Crabb church is close by, Lewis," remarked the Squire, "and it's a steaming hot day."

"But I must go to Timberdale this morning. It was poor Jacob's church, you know, for many years. And though he is no longer there, I should like to see the desk and pulpit which he filled."

"Aye, to be sure," readily acquiesced the Squire. "I'd go with you myself, Lewis, but for the heat."

Dr. Lewis said he should take the roadway, not the short cut through Crabb Ravine; it was a good round, and we had to start early. I liked Anne better than ever: no one could look nicer than she did in her trim black dress. As we walked along, Dr. Lewis frequently halted to recognise old scenes, and ask me was it this or that.

"That fine place out yonder?" he cried, stopping to point to a large stone house a mile off, partly hidden amidst its beautiful grounds.

"I ought to know whose it is. Let me see!"

"It is Sir Robert Tenby's seat—Bellwood. Your landlord, sir."

"Aye, to be sure—Bellwood. In my time it was Sir George's, though."

"Sir George died five or six years ago."

"Has Sir Robert any family? He must be middle-aged now."

"I think he is forty-five, or so. He is not married."

"Does he chiefly live here?"

"About half his time; the rest he spends at his house in London. He lives very quietly. We all like Sir Robert."

We sat in the rector's pew, having it to ourselves. Herbert Tanerton did the duty, and gave a good sermon. Nobody yet was appointed to the vacant living, which was in Sir Robert Tenby's gift. Herbert, meanwhile, took charge of the parish, and many people thought he would get it—as he did, later.

The Bellwood pew faced the rector's, and Sir Robert sat in it alone. A fine-looking man, with greyish hair, and a homely face that you took to at once. He seemed to pay the greatest attention to Herbert Tanerton's sermon; possibly was deliberating whether he was worthy of the living or not. In the pew behind him sat Mrs. Macbean, an old lady who had been housekeeper at Bellwood during two generations; and the Bellwood servants sat farther down.

We were talking to Herbert Tanerton outside the church after service, when Sir Robert came up and spoke to the parson. He, Herbert, introduced Dr. Lewis to him as the late rector's brother. Sir Robert shook hands with him at once, smiled pleasantly at Anne, and nodded to me as he continued his way.

"Do you like your house?" asked Herbert.

"I shall like it by-and-by, no doubt," was the doctor's answer. "I should like it now but for the paint. The smell is dreadful."

"Oh, that will soon go off," cried Herbert.

"Yes, I hope so; or I fear it will make me ill."

In going back we took Crabb Ravine, and were at home in no time. They asked me to stay dinner, and I did so. We had a loin of lamb, and a raspberry tart, if anybody's curious to know. Dr. Lewis had taken a fancy to me: I don't know why, unless it was that he had liked my father; and I'm sure I had taken one to them. But the paint did smell badly, and that's the truth.

In all my days I don't think I ever saw a man so incapable as Dr. Lewis; so helpless as to the common affairs of life. What he would have done without Anne, I know not. He was just fit to sit down and be led like a child; to have said to him,—Come here, go there; do this, do the other. Therefore, when he asked me to run in in the morning and see if he wanted anything, I was not surprised. Anne thought he might be glad of my shoulder to lean upon when he walked about the garden.

It was past eleven when I got there, for I had to do an errand first of all for the Squire. Anne was kneeling down in the parlour amidst a lot of small cuttings of plants which she had brought from France. They lay on the carpet on pieces of paper. She wore a fresh white cotton gown, with black dots upon it, and a black bow at the throat; and she looked nicer than ever.

"Look here, Johnny; I don't know what to do. The labels have all come off, and I can't tell which is which. I suppose I did not fasten them on securely. Sit down—if you can find a chair."

The chairs and tables were strewed with books, most of them French, and other small articles, just unpacked. I did not want a chair, but knelt down beside her, asking if I could help. She said no, and that she hoped to be straight by the morrow. The doctor had stepped out, she did not know where, "to escape the smell of the paint."

I was deep in the pages of one of the books, "*Les Contes de ma bonne*," which Anne said was a great favourite of hers, though it was meant for children; and she had her head, as before, bent over the green sprigs and labels, when a shadow, passing the open glass doors, glanced in and halted. I supposed it must be the doctor; but it was Sir Robert Tenby. Up I started; Anne did the same quietly, and quietly invited him in.

"I walked over to see Dr. Lewis, and to ask whether the house required anything else done to it," he explained. "And I had to come early, as I am leaving the neighbourhood this afternoon."

"Oh, thank you," said Anne, "it is very kind of you to come. Will

you please to sit down, sir," hastily taking the books off a chair. "Papa is out, but I think he will not be long."

"Are you satisfied with the house?" he asked.

"Quite so, sir; and I do not think it wants anything done to it at all. I hope you will not suppose we shall keep it in this state," she added, rather anxiously. "When things are being unpacked, the rooms are sure to look untidy."

Sir Robert smiled. "You seem very notable, Miss Lewis."

"Oh, I do everything," she answered. "There is nobody else."

He had not taken the chair, but went out, saying he should probably meet Dr. Lewis—leaving a message for him, about the house, in case he did not.

"He is your great and grand man of the neighbourhood, is he not, Johnny?" said Anne, as she knelt down on the carpet again.

"Oh, he is grand enough."

"Then don't you think he is, considering that fact, very pleasant and affable? I'm sure he is as simple and free in manners and speech as we are."

"Most grand men—if they are truly great—are that. Your upstarts assume no end of airs."

"I know who will never assume airs, Johnny. He has none in him."

"Who's that?"

"Yourself."

It made me laugh. I had nothing to assume them for.

It was either that afternoon or the following one that Dr. Lewis came up to the Squire and old Coney as they were talking together in the road. He told them that he could not possibly stay in the house; he should be laid up if he did; he must go away until the smell from the paint was gone. That he was looking ill, both saw; and they believed he did not complain without cause.

The question was, where could he go? Mr. Coney hospitably offered him house-room; but the doctor, while thanking him, said the smell might last a long while, and he should prefer to be independent. He had been thinking of going with Anne to Worcester for a time. Did they know of lodgings there?

"Better go to an hotel," said the Squire. "No trouble at an hotel."

"But hotels are not always comfortable. I cannot feel at home in them," argued the poor doctor. "And they cost too much besides."

"You might chance to hit upon lodgings where you'd not be any more comfortable, Lewis. And they'd be very dull for you."

"There's Lake's boarding-house," put in old Coney, while the doctor was looking blank and helpless.

"A boarding-house? Aye, that might do, if it's not a noisy one."

'It's not noisy at all,' cried the Squire. "It's uncommonly well

conducted : sometimes there are not three visitors in the house. You and Miss Lewis would be comfortable there."

And for Lake's boarding-house Dr. Lewis and Anne took their departure on the very next day. If they had but foreseen the trouble their stay at it would lead to !

II.

Lake's boarding-house stood near the cathedral. A roomy house, with rather shabby furniture in it : but in boarding-houses and lodgings people don't, as a rule, look for gilded chairs and tables. Some years before, Mrs. Lake, the wife of a professional man, and a gentlewoman, was suddenly left a widow with four infant children, boys, and nothing to keep them on. What to do she did not know. And it often puzzles me to think what such poor ladies *do* do, left in similar straits.

She had her furniture ; and that was about all. Friends suggested that she should take a house in a likely situation, and try for some lady boarders ; or perhaps for some of the college boys, whose homes lay at a distance. Not to make too long a story of it, it was what she did do. And she had been in the house ever since, struggling on (for these houses mostly do entail a struggle), sometimes flourishing in numbers, sometimes down in the dumps with empty rooms. But she had managed to bring the children up : the two elder ones were out in the world, the two younger were still in the college school. Mrs. Lake was a meek little woman, ever distracted with practical cares, especially as to stewards and gravities : Miss Dinah Lake (her late husband's sister, and a majestic lady of middle age), who lived with her, chiefly saw to the company.

But now, would anybody believe that Dr. Lewis was "that shy," as their maid, Sally, expressed it—or perhaps you would rather call it helpless—that he begged the Squire to let me go with him to Lake's. Otherwise he should be lost, he said ; and Anne, accustomed to French ways and habits, could not be of much use to him in a strange boarding-house : Johnny knew it, and would feel at home there.

When Captain Sanker and his wife (if you have not forgotten them) first came to Worcester, they stayed at Lake's while fixing on a residence, and that's how we became tolerably well acquainted with the Lakes. This year that I am now telling of was the one that preceded the accident to King Sanker.

So I went with the Lewises. It was late in the afternoon when we reached Worcester, close upon the dinner hour—which was five o'clock, and looked upon as quite a fashionable hour in those days. The dinner bell had rung, and the company had filed into dinner when we got downstairs.

But there was not much company staying in the house. Mrs. Lake

did not appear, and Miss Dinah Lake took the head of the table. It happened more often than not that Mrs. Lake was in the kitchen, superintending the dishing-up of the dinner and seeing to the ragouts and sauces ; especially upon the advent of fresh inmates, when the fare would be unusually plentiful. Mrs. Lake often said she was a "born cook," which was lucky, as she could not afford to keep first-rate servants.

Miss Dinah sat at the head of the table, in a rustling green gown and primrose satin cap. Having an income of her own she could afford to dress. (Mrs. Lake's best gown was black silk, thin and scanty.) Next to Miss Dinah sat a fair, plump little woman, with round green eyes and a soft voice : at any rate, a soft way of speaking : who was introduced to us as Mrs. Captain Podd. She in turn introduced her daughters, Miss Podd and Miss Fanny Podd : both fair like their mother, and with the same kind of round green eyes. A Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell completed the company ; two silent people who seemed to do nothing but eat.

Dr. Lewis sat by Mrs. Captain Podd : and very pleasant and attentive the doctor found her. He was shy as well as helpless ; but she talked to him freely in her low soft voice and put him altogether at his ease. My place chanced to be next to Miss Fanny Podd's ; and she began at once to put me at my ease, as her mother was putting the doctor.

"You are a stranger here, at the dinner table," observed Miss Fanny ; "but we shall be good friends presently. People in this house soon become sociable."

"I am glad of that."

"I did not quite hear your name. Did you catch mine?—Fanny Podd."

"Yes. Thank you. Mine is Ludlow."

"I suppose you never were at Worcester before?"

"Oh, I know Worcester very well indeed. I live in Worcestershire."

"Why!" cried the young lady, neglecting her soup to stare at me, "we heard you had just come over from living in France. Miss Dinah said so—that old guy at the top, yonder."

"Dr. and Miss Lewis have just come from France. Not I. I know Miss Dinah Lake very well."

"Do you! Don't go and tell her I called her an old guy. Mamma wants to keep in with Miss Dinah, or she might be disagreeable. What a stupid town Worcester is!"

"Perhaps you don't know many people in it."

"We don't know anybody. We had been staying last in a garrison town. That was pleasant : so many nice officers about. You could not go to the window but there'd be some in sight. Here nobody seems to pass by but a crew of staid old parsons."

"We are near the cathedral ; that's why you see so many parsons. Are you going to remain long in Worcester?"

"That's just as the fancy takes mamma. We have been here already six or seven weeks."

"Have you no settled home?"

Miss Fanny Podd pursed up her lips and shook her head. "We like change best. A settled home would be wretchedly dull. Ours was given up when papa died."

Thus she entertained me to the end of dinner. We all left the table together—wine was not in fashion at Lake's. Those who wanted any had to provide it for themselves ; but the present company seemed to be satisfied with the home-brewed ale. Mrs. Captain Podd put her arm playfully into that of Dr. Lewis and said she would show him the way to the drawing-room.

And so it went on all the evening : she making herself agreeable to the doctor ; Miss Podd to Anne ; Fanny to me. Of course it was highly good-natured of them. Mrs. Podd discovered that the doctor liked backgammon ; and she looked for a moment as cross as a wasp on finding there was no board in the house.

"Quite an omission, my dear Miss Dinah," she said, smoothing away the frown with a sweet smile. "I always thought a backgammon board was as necessary to a house as are chairs and tables."

"Mrs. Lake had a board once," said Miss Dinah ; "but the boys got possession of it, and somehow it was broken. We have chess—and cribbage."

"Would you like a hand at cribbage, my dear sir?" asked Mrs. Podd of the doctor.

"Don't play it, ma'am," said he.

"Ah"—with a little drawn-out sigh. "Julia, love, would you mind singing one of your quiet songs? Or a duet. Fanny, sweetest, try a quiet duet with your sister. Go to the piano."

If they called the duet quiet, I wondered what they'd call noisy. You might have heard it over at the cathedral. The playing and singing was of the style known as "showy." Some people admire it : but it is a good thing ear-drums are not easily cracked.

The next day Mrs. Podd made the house a present of a backgammon board : and in the evening she and Dr. Lewis sat down to play. Our number had decreased, for Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell had left ; and Mrs. Lake dined with us, taking the foot of the table. Miss Dinah always, I found, kept the head.

"She is so much better calculated to preside than I am," whispered meek Mrs. Lake to me later in the evening. Happening to pass the kitchen door after dinner, I saw her in there, making the coffee. "What should I do without Dinah!"

"But need you come out to make the coffee, Mrs. Lake?"

"My dear, when I leave it to the servants, it is not drinkable. I am rather sorry Mrs. Podd makes a point of having coffee in an evening. Our general rule is, to give only tea."

"I'd not give in to Mrs. Podd."

"Well, dear, we like to be accommodating when we can. Being my cousin, she orders things more freely than our ladies usually do. Dinah calls her exacting; but ——"

"Is Mrs. Podd your cousin?" I interrupted, in surprise.

"My first cousin. Did you not know it? Her mother and my mother were sisters."

"The girls don't call you 'aunt.'"

"They do sometimes when we are alone. I suppose they think I am beneath them—keeping a boarding-house."

I had not much liked the Podd at first, and as the days went on I liked them less. They were not sincere: I was quite sure of it: Mrs. Podd especially. But the manner in which she had taken Dr. Lewis under her wing was marvellous. He began to think he could not move without her: he was as one who has found a sheet-anchor. She took all trouble of all kinds from him: her chief aim seemed to be to make his life pass pleasantly. She'd order a carriage and take him for a drive in it; she'd parade the High Street on his arm; she'd sit with him in the Green within the enclosure, though Miss Dinah told her one day she had not the right of entrance there; she'd walk him off to inspect the monuments in the cathedral, and talk with him in the cloisters of the old days when Cromwell stabled his horses there. After dinner they would play backgammon till bedtime. And with it all, she was so gay and sweet and gentle, that Dr. Lewis thought she must be a very angel come out of heaven.

"Johnny, I don't like her," said Anne to me one day. "She seems to take papa completely out of my hands. She makes him feel quite independent of me."

"You like her as well as I do, Anne."

"This morning I found him in the drawing-room; alone, for a wonder; he was gazing up in his abstracted way, as if wanting to discover what the pinnacles of the cathedral were made of, which look to be so close, you know, from the windows of that room. 'Papa, you are lonely,' I said. 'Would you like to walk out?—or what would you like to do?' 'My dear, Mrs. Podd will see to it all,' he answered; 'don't trouble yourself; I am waiting for her.' It is just as though he had no more need of me."

Anne Lewis turned away to hide her wet eyelashes. For my part, I thought the sooner Mrs. Captain Podd betook herself from Lake's boarding-house, the better. It was too much of a good thing.

That same afternoon I heard some conversation not meant for me. Behind the house was a square patch of ground called a garden, con-

taining a few trees and some sweet herbs. I was sitting on the bench underneath the high, old-fashioned dining-room windows, thinking how hot the sun was, wishing for something to do, and wondering when Dr. Lewis meant to send me home. He and Mrs. Podd were out together; Anne was in the kitchen, teaching Mrs. Lake some French cookery. Miss Dinah sat in the dining-room, in her spectacles, darning table-cloths.

"Oh, have you come in!" I suddenly heard her say, as the door opened. And it was Mrs. Podd's voice which answered.

"The sun is so very hot: poor dear Dr. Lewis felt quite ill. He is gone up to his room for half an hour to sit quietly in the shade. Where are my girls?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Miss Dinah: and it struck me that her tone of voice was rather crusty. "Mrs. Podd, I must again ask you when you will let me have some money?"

"As soon as I can," said Mrs. Podd: who seemed, by the sound, to have thrown herself upon a chair, and to be fanning her face with a rustling newspaper.

"But you have said that for some weeks. When is the 'soon' to be?"

"You know I have been disappointed in my remittances. It is really too hot for talking."

"I know that you say so. But we cannot go on without some money. The expenses of this house are heavy: how are they to be kept up if our guests don't pay us? Indeed you must let me have part of your account, if not all."

"My dear sweet creature, the house is not yours," returned Mrs. Podd, in her most honeyed accents.

"I manage it," said Miss Dinah, "and am responsible for the getting-in of the accounts. You know that our custom is to be paid weekly."

"Exactly, dear Miss Dinah. But I am sure that my cousin, Emma Lake, would not wish to inconvenience me. I am indebted to her; not to you; and I will pay her as soon as I can. My good creature, how *can* you sit stewing over that plain sewing this sultry afternoon!"

"It is my work," responded Miss Dinah. "We have not money to spend on new linen: trouble enough, it is, I can assure you, to keep the old decent."

"I should get somebody to help me. That young woman, Miss Lewis, might do it: she seems to have been used to all kinds of work."

"I wish you'd shut that door: you've left it open," retorted Miss Dinah: "I don't like sitting in a draught, though it is hot. And I beg of you to understand that we really cannot continue to keep

you and your daughters here unless you can manage to give us a little money."

By the shutting of the door and the silence that ensued, it was apparent that Mrs. Podd had departed, leaving Miss Dinah to her table-cloths. But now this had surprised me. For, to hear Mrs. Captain Podd and her daughters talk, and to see the way in which they dressed, one could not have supposed they were ever at a fault for ready cash.

At the end of ten days I went home. Dr. Lewis no longer wanted me: he had Mrs. Podd. And I think it must have been about ten days after that, that we heard the doctor and Anne were returning. The paint smelt still, but not as badly as before.

They did not come alone. Mrs. Podd and her two daughters accompanied them to spend the day. Mrs. Podd was in a ravishing new toilette; and I hoped Lake's boarding-house had been paid.

Mrs. Podd went into raptures over Maythorn Bank, paint and all. It was the sweetest little place she had ever been in, she said, and some trifling, judicious care would convert it into a paradise.

I know who had the present care; and that was Anne. They got over about twelve o'clock: and as soon as she had seen the ladies' things off, and they comfortably installed in the best parlour, its glass doors standing open to the fragrant flower-beds, she put on a big apron in the kitchen and helped Sally to get the dinner.

"Need you do it, Anne?" I said, running in, having seen her crumbling bread as I passed the window.

"Yes, I must, Johnny. Papa bade me have a nice dinner served to-day: and Sally is inexperienced, you know. She can roast and boil, but she knows nothing about the little dishes he likes. To tell you the truth," added Anne, glancing meaningly into my eyes for a moment, "I would rather be cooking here than talking with them there."

"Are you sorry to leave Worcester?"

"Yes, and no," she answered. "Sorry to leave Mrs. Lake and Miss Dinah, for I like them both: glad to be at home again and to have papa to myself. I shall not cry if we never see Mrs. Podd again. Perhaps I am mistaken; and I'm sure I did not think that the judging of others uncharitably was one of my faults; but I cannot help thinking that she has tried to estrange papa from me. I suppose it is her way: she cannot have any real wish to do it. However, she goes back to-night, and then it will be over."

"Who is at Lake's now?"

"Nobody—except the Podd. I am sorry, for I fear they have some difficulty to make both ends meet."

III.

Was it over! Anne Lewis reckoned without her host.

I was running in to Maythorn Bank the next morning, when I saw the shimmer of Anne's white garden-bonnet and her morning dress amidst the raspberry-bushes, and turned aside to greet her. She had a basin in her hand, picking the fruit, and the hot tears were running down her cheeks. Conceal her distress she could not; any attempt would have been worse than futile.

"Oh, Johnny, she is going to marry him!" cried she, with a burst of sobs.

"Going to marry him!—who? what?" I asked, taking the basin from her hand: for I declare that the truth did not strike me.

"*She* is. Mrs. Podd. She is going to marry papa."

For a moment she held her face against the apple-tree. The words confounded me. More real grief I had never seen. My heart ached for her.

"Don't think me selfish," she said, turning presently, trying to subdue the sobs and wiping the tears away. "I hope I am not that: or undutiful. It is not for myself that I grieve; indeed it is not; but for him."

I knew that.

"If I could but think it would be for his happiness! But oh, I fear it will not be. Something seems to tell me that it will not. And if—he should be—uncomfortable afterwards—miserable afterwards!—I think the distress would kill me."

"Is it *true*, Anne? How did you hear it?"

"*True!* Too true, Johnny. At breakfast this morning papa said, 'We shall be dull to-day without our friends, Anne.' I told him I hoped not, and that I would go out with him, or read to him, or do anything else he liked: and I reminded him of his small stock of choice books that he used to be so fond of. 'Yes, yes, we shall be very dull, you and I alone in this strange house,' he resumed. 'I have been thinking for some time we should be, Anne, and so I have asked that dear, kind, lively woman to come to us for good.' I did not understand him; I did not indeed, Johnny; and papa went on to explain. 'You must know that I allude to Mrs. Podd, Anne,' he said. 'When I saw her so charmed with this house yesterday, and we were talking about my future loneliness in it—and she lamented it, even to tears—one word led to another, and I felt encouraged to venture to ask her to share it and be my wife. And so, my dear, it is all settled; and I trust it will be for the happiness of us all. She is a most delightful woman, and will make the sunshine of any home.' I wish I could think so!" concluded Anne.

"No, don't take the basin," I said, as she went to do so. "I'll finish picking the raspberries. What are they for?"

"A pudding. Papa said he should like one."

"Why could not Sally pick them? Country girls are used to the sun."

"Sally is busy. Papa bade her clear out that room where our boxes were put: we shall want all the rooms now. Oh, Johnny, I wish we had not left France! Those happy days will never come again."

Was the doctor going into his dotage? The question crossed my mind. It might never have occurred to *me*; but one day at Worcester Miss Dinah had asked it in my hearing. I felt very uncomfortable, could not think of anything soothing to say to Anne, and went on picking the raspberries.

"How many do you want? Are these enough?"

"Yes," she answered, looking at the lot. "I must fill the basin up with currants."

We were bending over a currant-bush, Anne holding up a branch and I stripping it, when footsteps on the path close by made us both look up hastily. There stood Sir Robert Tenby. He stared at the distress on Anne's face, which was too palpable to be concealed, and asked without ceremony what was amiss.

It was the last feather that broke the camel's back. These words from a stranger, and his evident concern, put the finishing touch to Anne's state. She burst into more bitter tears than she had yet shed, and for a minute sobbed piteously.

"Is it any trouble that I can help you out of?" asked Sir Robert, in the kindest tones, feeling, no doubt, as sorry as he looked. "Oh, my dear young lady, don't give way like this!"

Touched by his sympathy, her heart seemed to open to him: perhaps she had need of finding consolation somewhere. Drying her tears, Anne told her story simply: commenting on it as she had commented to me.

"It is for my father's sake that I grieve, sir; that I fear. I feel sure Mrs. Podd will not make him really happy."

"Well, well, we must hope for the best," spoke Sir Robert, who looked a little astonished at hearing the nature of the grievance, and perhaps thought Anne's distress more exaggerated than it need have been. "Dr. Lewis wrote to me last night about some alteration he wants to make in the garden; I am come to speak to him of it."

"Alteration in the garden!" mechanically repeated Anne. "I have heard nothing about it."

He passed into the house to the doctor. We picked on at the currants, and then took them into the kitchen. Anne sat down on a chair to strip them from the stalks. Presently we saw Sir Robert and the doctor at one end of the garden, the latter drawing boundaries round a corner with his walking-stick.

Anne.

"Oh, I know," exclaimed Anne. "Yesterday Mrs. Podd suggested that a summer-house in that spot would be a delightful improvement. But I never, never could have supposed papa meant to act upon the suggestion."

Just so. Dr. Lewis wished to erect a summer-house of wood and trellis-work, but had not liked to do it without first speaking to his landlord.

As the days went on, Anne grew to feel somewhat reassured. She was very busy, for all kinds of preparations had to be made in the house, and the wedding was to take place at once.

"I think, perhaps, I took it up in a wrong light, Johnny," she said to me one day, when I went in and found her sewing at some new curtains. "I hope I did. It must have been the suddenness of the news, I suppose, and that I was so very unprepared for it."

"How do you mean? In what wrong light?"

"Nobody seems to think ill of it, or to foresee cause for apprehension. I am so glad. I don't think I ever can much like her: but if she makes papa happy, it is all I ask."

"Who has been talking about it?"

"Herbert Tanerton, for one. He saw Mrs. Podd at Worcester last week, and thought her charming. The very woman, he said, to do papa good; lively and full of resource. So it may all be for the best."

I should as soon have expected an invitation to the moon as to the wedding. But I got it. Dr. Lewis, left to himself, was feeling helpless again, and took me with him to Worcester on the eve of the happy day. We put up at the Bell Hotel for the night; but Anne went direct to Lake's boarding-house. I ran down there in the evening.

Whether an inkling of the coming wedding had got abroad, I can't say; it was to be kept private, and had been, so far as anybody knew; but Lake's house was full, not a room to be had in it for love nor money. Anne was put in a sleeping closet two yards square.

"It is not our fault," spoke Miss Dinah, openly. "We were keeping a room for Miss Lewis; but on Monday last when a stranger came, wanting to be taken in, Mrs. Podd told us Miss Lewis was going to the hotel with her father."

"My dear love, I thought you were," chimed in Mrs. Podd, as she patted Anne on the shoulder. "I must have mis-read a passage in your dear papa's letter, and so caught up the misapprehension. Never mind: you shall dress in my room if your own's not large enough. And I am sure all you young ladies ought to be obliged to me, for the new inmate is a delightful man. My daughters find him charming."

"The room is quite large enough, thank you," replied Anne, meekly.

"Do you approve of the wedding, Miss Dinah?" I asked her later, when we were alone in the dining-room. "Do you like it?"

Miss Dinah, who was counting a heap of glasses on the side-board that the maid had just washed and brought in, counted to the end, and then began upon the spoons.

"It is the only way we can keep our girls in check," observed she; "otherwise they'd break and lose all before them. I know how many glasses have been used at table, consequently how many go out to be washed, and the girl has to bring that same number in, or explain the reason why. As to the spoons, they get thrown away with the dish-water and sometimes into the fire. If they were silver it would be all the same."

"Do you like the match, Miss Dinah?"

"Johnny Ludlow," she said, turning round to face me, "we make a point in this house of not expressing our likes and dislikes. Our position is peculiar, you know. When people have come to years of discretion, and are of the age that Mrs. Podd is, not to speak of Dr. Lewis's, we must suppose them to be capable of judging and acting for themselves. We have not helped on the match by so much as an approving word or look: on the other hand, it has not lain in our duty or in our power to retard it."

Which was, of course, good sense. But for all her caution, I fancied she could have spoken against it, had she chosen.

A trifling incident occurred to me in going back to the Bell. Rushing round the corner into Broad Street, a tall, well-dressed man, sauntering on before me, suddenly turned on his heel, and threw away his cigar sideways. It caught the front of my shirt. I flung it off again; but not before it had burnt a small hole in the linen.

"I beg your pardon," said the smoker, in a courteous voice—and there was no mistaking him for anything but a gentleman. "I am very sorry. It was frightfully careless of me."

"Oh, it is nothing; don't think about it," I answered, making off at full speed.

St. Michael's Church stood in a nook under the cathedral walls: it is taken down now. It was there that the wedding took place. Dr. Lewis arrived at it more like a baby than a bridegroom, helpless and nervous to a painful degree. But Mrs. Podd made up for his deficiencies in her grand self-possession; her white bonnet and nodding feather seemed to fill the church. Anne wore grey silk; Julia and Fanny Podd some shining pink stuff that their petticoats could be seen through. Poor Anne's tears were dropping during the service; she kept her head bent down to hide them.

"Look up, Anne," I said from my place close to her. "Take courage."

"I can't help it, indeed, Johnny," she whispered. "I wish I could. I'm sure I'd not throw a damp on the general joy for the world."

The wedding party was a very small one indeed; just ourselves

and a stern-looking gentleman, who was said to be a lawyer-cousin of the Podds, and to come from Birmingham. All the people staying at Lake's had flocked into the church to look on.

"Pray take my arm. Allow me to lead you out. I see how deeply you are feeling this."

The ceremony seemed to be over almost as soon as it was begun—perhaps the parson, remembering the parties had both been married before, cut it short. And it was in the slight bustle consequent upon its termination that the above words, in a low, tender, and most considerate tone, broke upon my ear. Where had I heard the voice before?

Turning hastily round, I recognized the stranger of the night before. It was to Anne he had spoken, and he had already taken her upon his arm. Her head was bent still; the rebellious tears would hardly be kept back; and a sweet compassion sat on every line of his handsome features as he gazed down at her.

"Who is he?" I asked of Fanny Podd, as he walked off with Anne.

"Mr. Angerstyne—the most fascinating man I ever saw in my life. The Lakes could not have taken him in, but for mamma's inventing that little fable of Anne's going with old Lewis to the Bell. Trust her for not letting us two girls lose a chance," added free-speaking Fanny. "I may take your arm, I suppose, Johnny Ludlow."

And after a plain breakfast in private, which included only the wedding party, Dr. and Mrs. Lewis departed for Cheltenham.

The rest has to come.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



FALLING LEAVES.

Gold-tinted in the autumn sun, the autumn leaves are glowing,
Silently falling, one by one, while soft west winds are blowing;
More beautiful than in their birth, as Christians are in dying,
They gently rustle down to earth, while forest boughs are sighing.

OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

PERHAPS there never existed a time when the spirit of self-sacrifice was so little amongst us as at present. It is a virtue not understood of men : so sparsely practised that it seems—like many of the good old customs and fashions of our forefathers—to be dying out. Each for himself. Thus men argue : thus they act.

In seeking a reason, it may possibly be found—if, as some think, we have reached the beginning of the end—in the fulfilment of that prophecy which says that in the last days men shall run to and fro in the earth, that knowledge shall increase, and iniquity shall abound. Or it may be the result of the progress of the age, an evil of which the food that nourishes it is daily gaining strength and growth. The world is so over-populated—at least the world of our small island—that men are jostling each other : treading upon each other's heels : wrestling for place and power ; for wealth, and the grandeur wealth brings. No matter what the cost to honour and integrity ; what the increasing labour of mind and body ; still they wrestle.

"I must climb the social ladder. I must increase in riches and importance. My neighbour just now fills the lofty goal I covet. If I cannot attain to it unless he come down, let him fall." So man soliloquises, and proceeds to work accordingly.

Presently he gains his object. A. from his lofty height, with complacency and self-confidence, has looked down upon the struggling humanity below him. Suddenly, his very self-reliance assisting the downfall, he overbalances, and B. reigns in his stead. The latter in turn becomes self-gratulatory ; he has gained his end ; he cares little for the ruin he has effected. He goes forth to the high places of the world with songs triumphant.

This is no mere ideal picture. It is a truth and a fact, happening every day in a greater or less degree. All may witness for themselves who do not go through life with their eyes closed. The motto of the present hour is *Every man for himself*. It cannot be too often or too emphatically reiterated. "What can *I* do ? How shall *I* increase in importance, in riches, in the honour and glory of the world ? In what manner can I further *my* happiness, *my* comfort and welfare, gratify *my* senses ?" The question, "What can I do to help on others in a world labouring in care and misery ?" is passed over. Self-sacrifice is not to be thought of, or mentioned. "I have no time for it," says the worldly man : might he not add "no inclination" ? "My whole days and nights are occupied in the furtherance of my own work, schemes, pleasures."

This is quite true. He has no time for anything but himself. He feels that we are living at a rapid rate. If he halts a moment on the way, someone else passes him swiftly, and he is lost. His place is gone. He cannot recover it. So he goes onwards in selfishness and self-absorption, till time creeps and creeps; leaving with the rich and luxurious few traces of furrows or grey hairs; until at last the eyes close in their last sleep: one more life is over, for whose soul a world would be no ransom; and the body, so restless hitherto, in the tomb has rest.

Not for this were we brought into the world. Each life has a distinct and separate purpose of its own. Each soul is created, not only to accomplish some great work—for even the humblest career earnestly fulfilled will, when the life is laid aside, leave behind it an impression of completeness—but also to help on other souls through their pilgrimage of pain and travail. This cannot be done without an amount, more or less, of self-sacrifice.

It is terrible to contemplate the dearth of this spirit, arising in part from a lack of sympathy in the human heart: a want, mark you, that may be cultivated. Take, reader, a little of your own experience. Imagine yourself in great trouble; in sore need; be it that of pity, of disburdening your soul, or the strait of poverty. How many friends or acquaintances do you possess to whom you could confidently apply with a sure feeling of trust; of being fully heard and fully answered? Five? Four? Three? No. Two? Probably not. One? Even one is doubtful. And yet, inasmuch as every soul is born into the world with the impress of the Divine Image, so no soul *need* have a heart without sympathy, and all those beauties of virtue which therefrom blossom into life.

Success itself is one of the greatest destroyers of self-sacrifice, unless the mind be noble and the heart large; just as wealth often closes its doors to the need of the world, because the thoughtless soul has come to be unable to realise in its fulness the need that exists. "I am rich, and lack naught; the distress and misery we hear of must be an idle tale; an overdrawn picture." Thus men cheat themselves. But, ye rich, believe it not. There is misery and wretchedness enough and to spare, in spite of the purple and fine linen that screen you from it; much that is in your power to lessen. But shillings must not be given for pounds, or pounds where you should give tens and hundreds. Take, for example, the collections in our London churches, on behalf of some good and pressing object, as an instance of what is, and what might be done. But the amount of charity in the world is quite apart from the question of self-sacrifice. People give out of their abundance, and much of it is terribly misapplied. There is no system in distributing.

Take the great world of commerce. How many of its members will exercise, in even a small degree, the spirit of self-sacrifice? "I am able to do this thing for A. He will be a thousand pounds the richer; I shall

be minus the five hundred pounds it would put into my pocket if I do it for myself. A. wants the thousand ; the five hundred to me is nothing. But it does not enter into the principle of business, and I cannot do it. No, I cannot. If I did do it, and the world knew, it would mock me." So A. does not get his thousand pounds, and B. pockets his five hundred. A. is ruined, perhaps : possibly drags down with him a wife and children ; and he never recovers his footing. "Sorry for him," says B., stifling qualms of conscience. "But I couldn't help it, clearly. Business is business."

And undoubtedly every man should do the very best he possibly can for himself in business ; *but only in fairness to his duty towards his neighbour*. I would repeat this and engrave it with a pen of iron if I could : as Job did those beautiful and awful words which tell us that though worms destroy our body—for which we toil so much and sacrifice so much—yet in our flesh shall we see God. You will sometimes hear a conversation after this manner : "Why did you not do so and so ? It would have been better for you." "Yes ; but would it have been better for the opposite side ?" "No ; but you had the power in your own hands. To *you* would have been the advantage."

The reader had need to steel his heart against sophistry so worldly, argument so ungenerous. It may cost a little self-sacrifice, but if the heart becomes warped, the mind narrowed and disennobled, the conscience seared, the body had better, ere that take place, be resting quietly in its last home. We all do fade as a leaf ; so much for the body and the body only ; but the good that men do lives after them, and the evil is never undone. Pause and turn back ere launching out upon that wide road where return is so hard, which lays hold upon the soul with an iron grasp, to be loosened only by constant and painful struggles, ending, let us hope, in victory ; but a victory gained, it may be, only through death itself.

Not to the persistently selfish will the grave be without its victory, death without its terrors and its sting. As self-sacrifice is more or less in the reach of all, so all must seek to acquire it. Look to the heart ; make it green and keep it so ; remember that your opportunities and your life will not last for ever ; you cannot live your life twice over ; it will not return and enable you to redeem the days that have been mis-spent. Now or never must be said of the opportunities of to-day ; for after to-day its opportunities, taken or neglected, have passed into the womb of time and the records of eternity.

And then, to go to the reverse side of the picture, self-sacrifice brings its own reward. It gives happiness far greater than any wealth or power can bestow. In the latter case, every man in the zenith of success may lay his head upon his pillow at night, and confess that it is not without much vanity and vexation of spirit at the best ; a weariness of the flesh ; a thing which must pass away as a shadow. Not that

wealth and power are by any means to be despised, or not diligently sought after and received, when made subservient to the great ends of life. It is only when, as too often, they become the sole aim of heart and mind, that they bring with them ruin and destruction.

But self-sacrifice, it has been said, brings happiness. A happiness they wist not who cultivate it not. It transforms the mind ; it enlarges the heart ; it elevates the soul ; it makes man loved ; it assists him on in the right path ; it helps him to that peace which passeth all understanding. Perhaps at the close his funded wealth may be somewhat less than it would have been, though this is doubtful, for (with all reverence be it uttered : and let no man allow this thought to influence him in his good works) God is no man's debtor : but how much happier and nobler will he be : how much loftier and closer to heaven his soul ! And what about the great day of reckoning, when the Books are opened and each man's deeds are brought home to him ?

Surely one of the great incentives to good, to glorifying God in ourselves, and in our works, is the thought of the *gratitude* we owe Him for the untold mercies and privileges we possess. Who can number his own individually?—and who can say he deserves the least of them ? “The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.” He it is who gives and has power to take away. Render, O reader ! unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, but remember, what is far more important, to render unto God the things that are God's. What we owe to man in this world, the law makes us pay ; if we do not, it is summarily enforced. God speaks to us only in the still small voice of conscience : we can pay Him or not as we please ; but there will come a day of reckoning.

But the most beautiful of all self-denial, and perhaps the most difficult to practise, is that which is, or ought to be, carried on in the sacred precincts of home. At home it is very probable that, if called upon, each would be found willing to lay down his life for the other. But we are not required to perform heroic deeds : if we were, and they became common, probably that very fact would cause them to lose their influence, and we should give them up also. Life is made up of small things, and it is precisely in these that it is most difficult to be self-sacrificing—every-day matters which seem too trivial to mention ; arising with the hour and dying with it, to give place to something equally unremarkable. The constant giving way in trifles and trifling inclinations ; sacrificing personal wants and whims to each other. One wishes to go here, another there ; one wishes to do this, another that ; two wish for some new bauble, or object of necessity—the purse will admit of the gratification of one only ; two are invited to some delightful country place, or the attractions of a London season—the duties of home permit only one to be absent. The key to solve these difficulties, the only spirit able to meet them, is that of self-sacrifice. This will go far to form beauty of character ; to render home

that abode of harmony which all homes should be : giving up one to the other.

To those who have never tried it, cultivated or practised it, it will be a difficult matter at the outset. Nothing is so hard as for a selfish man to put away self. Self, self, self, has been so constantly the watchword and key-note of his life, that it comes uppermost in all cases ; an object which pervades more or less every action ; a weed choking the good seed that, let us hope, is lurking in every heart, ready to take root and spring up. It is an evil to which men are far more prone than women. Taken in the aggregate, men are essentially and exceedingly selfish ; women self-sacrificing, bearing in silence, yielding. To the shame of men be it spoken. They, the stronger, should be ready to put forth all the greatness of character which by their very strength is able to shine forth in them. They should be self-forgetful, not only towards women, but towards each other ; seeking each other's good, promoting each other's welfare.

I would that each man reading these words should examine his own heart. If he sees lurking there the demon of selfishness : and so spoilt and petted are many of us from youth upwards that it often lurks there unknown and unsuspected until accident or something else points out to us : if he finds lurking within him the hideous demon—one of the most hateful sins of our fallen nature—let him strive his utmost to cast it out. A great struggle will ensue ; it may be a long one : but as no man ever fought in vain who fights earnestly and in the right way, so will he in the end gain the crown of victory.

No selfish man or woman was ever yet completely happy. They may cheat themselves into a belief that they are, for thought and conscience are lost in the mad whirl and rush of life. But it is a mere delusive happiness, which disappears at the moment we think to clutch it ; and, like the wily *ignis-fatuus*, leads us an endless dance over bog and moor, to escape us at last. Then, weary and spent, we lie down : and perchance that most terrible experience, the remorse of a wasted and misapplied life, comes in and takes possession of us for ever.

The spirit of self-sacrifice is one of the great beauties of holiness. Husband yielding to wife, wife to husband ; brother to brother, sister to sister ; friend to friend : in great things ; but in small especially. First and foremost, see that the spirit is with you at home ; then carry it abroad into the world. It is a spirit that will sweeten happiness and lighten trouble ; and when the soul is ready to wing its flight to its eternal home, it will have the unspeakable consolation of knowing that it has not lived to itself ; that it has left the world happier and better in some degree than it found it ; that it has been faithful to its earthly mission. So will it listen with unutterable bliss to the sentence : "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

WITHIN THEIR GATES.

I.

THE summer sun blazes down hotly enough upon the dwellers in cities, upon the inhabitants of bare, low-lying countries. But far away in the cool regions that lie under the friendly shadow of those hills, that are so grand, and so remote and unfrequented that they hardly seem to belong to the rest of our island, all is freshness and delight. No paving-stones are here to burn the feet, no white sands to give back the fierce glare of the sun. Everywhere the green livery of nature is tinged with living gold; pleasant breezes blow on crystal streams, brown hills near at hand melt into blue ones afar off; sunny meadows skirt woods dark with shadow; and glimpses of landscape are caught that might ravish an artist, if ever artist came to these primitive solitudes. The roads which traverse this region are mostly good; and, whether flecked by the shadows of waving woods, or sweeping past orchards where the fruit-trees stand waist-deep in luxuriant grass, or in front of the old-fashioned country houses, are always pleasant highways for the traveller.

Along one of these highways, on a summer evening when the air seemed full of golden serenity, when the shadows were long and the day near its close, came a man who did not belong to any holiday class of traveller. He was a pedestrian of jaded appearance, whose dress was covered with dust, and whose lagging step proved that he had travelled long and far, and he bore in his hand a small black valise. Despite this apparent fatigue, however, and notwithstanding that he was plainly little used to hardship, he kept steadily on his way, glancing rarely to the right or left, but fixing his gaze on the road before him and plodding steadily forward. He was young; six or seven and twenty, perhaps; and he evidently belonged to the better classes, for "gentleman" was written on every look and movement. His dark face, of remarkably fine, clear outline, his lithe, tall, slender figure, his delicate hand and shapely foot, attested this fact in a manner which could not be doubted or denied. He wore no beard; and as he walked his lips were compressed rigidly, giving an expression of resolution, of defiant determination, to his face.

The sun was very nearly gone when he came to a fork in the highway where no less than three roads diverged towards widely different points. Having paused and looked vainly around for any trace of a sign-post or milestone to direct his steps, he sat down at the foot of a large tree with an air of exhaustion.

"There's nothing for it but to wait until somebody comes by who can direct me," he said to himself. "And I don't think I need push on so very exhaustingly," he added. "Surely this place is remote enough. It seems to be the fag-end of a desolate wilderness."

The tree stood on the strip of green that bordered the highway. He put his back against the trunk, and in a few minutes was asleep from sheer weariness.

An hour later he still slept—doubled up now in a curious position, with his head on the moss-cushioned root of the tree—when the stillness of the road was broken by the roll of wheels and the tramp of a horse's feet. The sounds might have been heard for a minute, or two before the cause of them appeared. Then a white-faced horse came into sight, proceeding at a sedate trot and drawing a large gig, in which a middle-aged man and a young woman were seated. The former looked like a substantial farmer; no doubt was one; he had a strongly-marked, intelligent face and iron-grey hair. The girl was pretty and blooming, plain in dress, lady-like in appearance, very quiet in manner. She had untied her bonnet, so warm was the evening, and sat with an elbow on the wing of the gig, and one dark-gloved hand pressing her face thoughtfully.

In the approaching gloom of the evening neither of them observed that dark object under the tree, with his valise lying beside him; but the horse, passing close to it, chose to be startled. He shied, and darted off sideways across the road.

"Whoa!—Steady!—What is the matter with you, Billy?" cried the farmer, pulling sharply at the reins.

"Some one is lying down there," whispered the girl.

The start of the horse, the noise of the driver, conspired to awaken the sleeper. He sprang to his feet and stared at the cause of the interruption; a curious look of alarm, a quiet alertness, in every line of his face.

"Who are you? What on earth are you doing there?" growled the farmer, vexed at the contretemps. "Do you see you have frightened my horse?"

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, haughtily. "How was I to know that a sleeping man would frighten your horse? I sat down here to wait until I could meet with some one who would inform me whither these different roads lead."

"They lead to several places—none of them very near at hand," answered the farmer, still indulging in a steady stare at his interlocutor. "Night is coming on apace. May I ask how you are travelling?"

"I am travelling on foot—taking a walking tour," answered the young man, curtly.

"Where do you come from?"

"That is not of any consequence. But I like to know where I am going. Whither will *that* road take me?"

"To Craig's Point—a long way off."

"And that one?"

"Will take you to the foot of the mountains, if you've a mind to go that way."

"And this?"

"To the nearest market town. It's nine miles away."

The traveller looked down at his boots—thinking, perhaps, of the weary feet within them. Then he glanced at the fading glow on the western sky, and finally spoke abruptly :

"Is there any house of entertainment near here where I could obtain food and shelter for the night?"

"There's no regular house of entertainment nearer than the market town," answered the farmer.

The girl beside him gave his arm a slight touch at this juncture, but obtained no response of any kind. The arm remained stolidly unmoved, and the keen grey eyes remained fastened on the overcast face of the pedestrian.

"Then I must try my luck across country—that's all," said the latter, stooping for his hat. "I am obliged for your information," he added, after he had recovered this article, "and I am sorry to have detained you. I daresay I shall find some farmhouse or cottage homestead to take me in. Good evening."

"Stop a minute," said the farmer, quietly, and with the deliberate air of a man to whom time is of very small importance. "If you have no objection to mention your name and your occupation, I will offer you a night's lodging in *my* house. It is near at hand; and you might, perhaps, go farther and fare worse."

"I prefer to go farther and fare worse, then," answered the young man, haughtily. "I give no account of myself at any man's bidding; and, with thanks for your offer, I have the honour to wish you again good evening."

He bowed as he spoke—it is doubtful whether honest David Owen ever received so superb a salutation before—and turning, strode quickly down one of the roads which lay before him, his agile, nervous figure passing soon out of sight in the blue shades of the gathering twilight.

The two in the gig looked mutely after him, and a minute at least elapsed before either of them spoke. It was the girl: and her tone had an unconscious reproach in it.

"Dear father, how could you!"

"You're a fool, Mary!" returned her father—not roughly, but good-naturedly. "I knew what you meant by your pushing and pinching my arm; but I suspected him somehow."

"Suspected what?"

"I don't know. He'd not have been so peppery had all been

square with him. And did you notice how he started when he first saw us?"

"I only noticed that he awoke suddenly out of sleep, and looked very tired. I fear you hurt his feelings."

"Hurt a fiddlestick," rejoined Mr. Owen. "A straightforward man does not object to telling who he is. Hold the reins a minute, will you, Mary? See this trace!"

The trace had to be spliced together in an impromptu fashion: as there were no materials ready to hand, it took some time to do: and it was very nearly dark when Billy's owner mounted again to his place, took the reins from his daughter's hand, and started off at a rattling pace again.

"Supper must be waiting," he remarked, "and they'll all be wondering what has become of us. I hope we shall not meet that man. He took this road, and perhaps he may lie down for another nap, and make Billy break the other trace."

They drove rapidly along the darkening highway, but they saw no sign of the pedestrian with whom they had parted at the fork of the road. A dusk mantle of twilight clothed the broad fields on each side. Over the infinite depths of blue sky a few stars were sprinkled, when the farmer at last drew Billy up at his own gate. As he did so, Mary uttered a sudden, startled cry.

"Father," she exclaimed, "look! What's that?—there!—on the ground?"

"What do you mean?" testily inquired Mr. Owen, whose eyes were not so good as her own, and whose patience was beginning to give way. "Is it that confounded fellow again?"

Without answering, his daughter sprang lightly out of the gig, and ran forward to the gate, where on the ground—almost under Billy's feet, and immediately in front of Billy's path—lay prone and senseless the figure of the stranger with whom they had parted half an hour before.

"It is the same man," she said, as her father came more deliberately to her side; "and I—I think he's dead."

"Not a bit of it," said Mr. Owen, feeling the warm skin and the feebly-beating pulse. "But he seems to be in a bad way, from some cause or other—I hope it's not whisky. Run to the house, Mary, and send somebody here. Whoever he is, he is lying helpless at our own gate, and we shall have to take him in *now*."

Mary obeyed his order literally. She ran with the fleetness of a deer to the dwelling-house. It was a low, substantial tenement, surrounded by its farm-buildings, and looking on in front to a good garden and grass-plot, which was shut in by trees. Any dwelling-place more solitary than this could not well be found, for not another of any description was within sight.

One or two of the out-door men stood about the premises, waiting probably for the arrival of the master. Miss Owen said a hasty word of explanation, and sent them running to the gate. This was barely done, when her young brothers and sisters came trooping out.

"Is that you, Mary? How late you are! Where's father? Supper has been waiting ever so long."

Amidst the children had come forth a young man of four or five and twenty, one Alfred Hale. Mary, out of courtesy to him, addressed her explanation to himself, rather than to the children.

"Perhaps you can help to bring him in, Mr. Hale," she said, "if you would not mind the trouble. One of the men will have to take Billy, and my father is very tired."

"Certainly," he answered, with alacrity. "Who is he? Do you know him?"

"Not at all: he's a stranger. We saw him lying at the bend, as I tell you; and then found him here at the gate, insensible. I thought he looked very fatigued."

Mr. Hale strode off in the direction of the gate. The two sons of the family, David and Tom, well-grown boys, started off in his wake. The three girls plied their sister with all manner of questions.

"Don't ask me now, Lucy," she said. "Where's Nanny? We must see to the best bedroom."

"The best bedroom!" echoed Lucy. "Is he a gentleman, then?"

"Oh, a gentleman, certainly."

The stranger revived, and was assisted to the house by Mr. Hale and the farmer. Whisky had nothing to do with his condition—as the latter found, to his relief. He had fainted from sheer exhaustion. Some refreshment was given to him, but he was still so faint and weak that the farmer, all hospitality now, insisted upon his going to bed at once.

"Is a room ready for him, Mary?" he asked.

"Yes, father, quite."

Mr. Hale was ready to help him up the stairs. The stranger held out his hand to his host.

"I thank you from my heart," he said. "You seemed to take a dislike to me, I thought; and therefore I feel the more indebted to your goodness and hospitality."

"Dislike! Not a bit of it," cried the farmer, heartily. "Tut, man, go to bed and rest."

Presently Mr. Hale came down again, and took his place at the supper-table. He was an out-of-door master at a neighbouring school, the school that had the honour of educating the young Owens. When he came first to the district, some six months ago, he was at an utter fault for some suitable place to board at. No family was found willing to take a gentleman in: in fact, no family lived within reasonable dis-

tance : and in sheer distress he applied to David Owen. Mr. Owen demurred at first : he had never been accustomed to anything of the kind. But upon its being suggested to him by the master of the school (who had no accommodation in his own house) that it might prove of benefit to David and Tom to have their tutor in the house, and to be accompanied by him often to and fro, Mr. Owen consented. This young man, Alfred Hale, hoped to be a clergyman some time, but he had to work his way on to it. So here he was, living at the farmer's house, almost as one of themselves.

The boys did not care for him : they thought him sullen. Certainly he was a very silent, self-contained man. Mary Owen hardly knew whether she liked him or not. She did *not* like him in the way he would have wished : for it was very evident, at any rate to her, that he had learnt to love her deeply. She was not sure in her own mind that she never should love him : but she never, by word or look, gave him the slightest encouragement to think so.

II.

The stranger whom David Owen thus received within his doors was not destined to leave them for some time. Fatigue and unwonted exposure had done their work. He tossed through the night aching in every limb and burning with fever, and when morning came was in a condition which made movement impossible. It was evident that he had caught a chill, probably from sleeping on the grass, damp with the night-dews. Ill though he was, however, he was able to prescribe for himself, to refuse peremptorily to see a doctor, and to assure his host—who came in and looked gravely at him—that he should “pull through” in a few days.

These few days proved of considerable duration. He was at no time in a critical condition, but he was certainly very ill, and only the native strength of a good constitution, and perhaps the good nursing and the pure air of the rural spot, brought him safely through the fever which attacked the foundation of life. He gave Mary Owen and Nanny, the old servant, plenty of occupation ; and the former plenty of food for thought, too, during the golden days and balmy nights of the two or three weeks following his arrival. Who was he ?—what was he?—where did he come from? On all these points—even in the delirium which sometimes attacked him—he was mute, and left his entertainers room for the widest possible conjecture. Sometimes, when he was not himself, he would seem to be adding up incessant columns of figures ; and would mutter about bonds, stocks, securities ; so that Mary fancied he must be a banker.

But his own words, when he grew better, did not bear this idea out. One day when Mr. Owen was sitting in his room he told him his name

was Shepard, and that he was travelling through the principality as agent to a mining company.

But to this statement Mr. Owen shook his head when alone with his daughter. "He's a stranger within my gates, and I'll say nothing against him where curious ears can hear, or tattling tongues get hold of it," he said, "but I don't mind telling *you*, Mary, that I do not believe a word of the account he gives of himself."

"But what do you believe, father?" she answered. "What is it that you think?"

"I don't know, lass. An instinct lies in my mind that he is not what he makes himself out to be. How is it he never writes to anybody?—and has no letters?"

"He has been too ill to write."

"Then he might dictate to us. Anyway, he is my guest, and as such shall be regarded; and I don't know that anything else matters to us. But as to his being a common agent, travelling about to visit mines, he is nothing of the kind, rely upon it; he is too much of a gentleman for that."

Mr. Shepard gave no fuller account of himself. He only lay quiet and motionless as the fever left him, and the languor of convalescence began to come on—watching Mary with a steady, intent gaze which made her feel uncomfortable, as she brought him his food, or moved about his room. She had been his chief nurse throughout his illness, for her three younger sisters were heedless children, and her mother was dead; and old Nanny had her house-work to do: but it was only now that he began to appreciate what an excellent nurse she was—so light of step, so deft of touch, so low of voice, so fair and pleasant to look upon.

"How can I thank you enough for all that you have done for me?" he said one day, when she sat by him as he eat his dinner. "You have been—you *are*—so very kind to me."

"You have nothing to thank me for," answered she, simply. "You are sick and a stranger—it would be strange if we did not do all that we could for you. Is your dinner what you like? Can I get anything else for you?"

"It is excellent," said he, regarding it with the hungry eyes of a convalescent. "But there is something else you can do for me, if you choose. You can come and sit with me a little while this afternoon. I am horribly lonesome, and these newspapers"—pointing to some for which he had asked—"are worse than my own society."

So, later in the afternoon—when she had finished her work, and arrayed herself in a fresh, clean muslin—Mary, with her sewing in her hand, presented herself in the invalid's room, and sat down to make herself entertaining. This was not very difficult to accomplish, since she had only to answer the questions which her patient immediately

proceeded to ask. These related chiefly to her family—her father, brothers, sisters, herself—but when his curiosity was satisfied on these points, Mr. Shepard went on to other subjects. He asked if they had many neighbours, and if these neighbours often visited them, and whether the district, amid which chance had thrown him, was not exceptionally lonely and solitary. Finally he inquired if the young man he had seen on the night of his arrival was one of the family.

Then the glow on Mary's cheek deepened a little, and the white lids drooped over her blue eyes. "No," she answered. "That was Mr. Hale. He was a tutor at the school, and had been admitted, as a favour, to reside with them, but he was not one of the family."

"You mean he is not related to you," said the gentleman with a smile; "but perhaps he belongs to you in a different manner."

"He does not belong to us in any manner," said Mary, blushing more vividly now. Of course she understood what he meant; but it was quite true that the good-looking young usher did *not* belong to her—though it was equally true that he would have very much liked to do so.

"He must have very bad taste, then," said her companion. "If you are as kind a mistress as you are a nurse, I should ask nothing better than to belong to you."

The girl lifted her long lashes and shot a glance at him. Badinage was a thing unknown in that rustic district, and compliments were indissolubly connected with giggling and blushing and absurdity unutterable. Being sensible, and not altogether uncultivated, Miss Owen had never liked them, and now she wondered what this stranger meant. Was he in earnest, or was he laughing at her?

The stranger in question thought, meanwhile, that she made as pretty a picture as he had seen in many a day—the deep green foliage touched with gold, outside the window by which she sat, forming a background for her graceful head with its wealth of soft brown hair, her delicate, decided profile, and lovely complexion. He was in a mood to enjoy any slight passing pleasure; and it was more than a slight pleasure to watch Mary just then.

"Why do you look at me so?" he asked. "Have I said anything that you do not like? Is there any harm in thinking that if I were Mr. Hale I should *certainly* belong to you?"

"Yes, there is harm," said Mary, but she could not help dimpling into a smile; "because you don't mean it."

"Don't I?" said he, with a faint laugh. "Perhaps I know more about that than you do. But indeed, there is no need to say 'if I were Mr. Hale,' for I *do* belong to you by the right of treasure trove—that is, if you care to own me. When a man finds a piece of stray property in the public road, it belongs to him; and you found me there."

"But the property does not belong to him if somebody else comes forward and proves that it is theirs," said Mary, demurely. "Somebody else may claim you. Perhaps if I looked in those newspapers there, I might find you advertised as strayed, missing, or stolen."

Never was a shaft more randomly sent; never did one strike home with more telling effect. Though the soi-disant mining agent had himself under tolerable control, his change of countenance at those words fairly startled Mary. As he knew very well, he was *not* advertised in any of those papers, but still the allusion —

"I beg your pardon," faltered the girl, who had spoken in mere sportive lightness. "I did not intend —"

He interrupted her with a slight laugh, though his face—even to the lips—was still curiously white. "It is I who should apologise," he said. "Your words made me realise, and rather painfully, that there is nobody in the world who cares whether I am dead or alive."

"Surely you must be mistaken," said Mary, sympathetically.

The handsome dark eyes looking at her began to touch her fancy—a thing easily touched at twenty, and which many a woman takes for her heart, to the ruin and misery of her life. But—was it quite sure that Mary's fancy had not been touched by this good-looking patient of hers before?

The pale lips curved into a smile, more significant than words, at her remark. "I am not mistaken with regard to my friends," said Mr. Shepard. "It is likely, however, that I may have a few enemies who are kind enough to take an interest in my affairs, and—my movements."

It is probable that the words were spoken recklessly—heedlessly. And, as if to cover the indiscretion, he changed the topic.

"This Mr. Hale?—is he what people call a gentleman? Young fellows well-born take situations in schools sometimes."

"I don't know that he is particularly well-born," replied Mary. "He is to be a clergyman eventually."

"He is poor, no doubt?"

"At present—yes."

Mary Owen remembered that incautious admission of the stranger, and pondered upon it. Had it any foundation, she secretly asked herself. Her interest in him, naturally enough, waxed greater from the mystery which surrounded him. He was far above the level of any of the men whom she had ever known, and yet he was thrown upon her father's hospitality like the merest strolling vagabond. If, as her father had remarked, he had only had friends to inquire after him, or to write to! What to make of it puzzled her exceedingly, and she considered the problem more than was good for her, and shook her pretty head over it.

Other people shook their heads over it, too—to themselves: her

father, who distrusted his reticent guest, and Mr. Hale, who was jealously suspicious of Mary's attendance in the sick-room. But David Owen, though he probably knew very little of Arab customs, was Arabian in his ideas of hospitality; and the embryo clergyman nursed his jealous wrath in silence.

Thus the days continued to go on. Mr. Shepard improved rapidly in strength, once convalescence began to set in. A sofa from the best sitting-room was moved upstairs for him; and as he lay upon it in the old-fashioned large bow-window, open to the balmy air, Mary would sit near, work in hand: sometimes one of her sisters with her, more often not. The girls did not like the confinement of the sick-chamber; and believed this sick gentleman had fallen at the gate for their especial benefit: for Mary had little time now to see that they prepared their lessons properly for the dame's school to which they went in the morning. Meanwhile, his and Mary's intercourse was becoming quite easy, natural, and confidential: confidential except as regarded his past life.

"What's that you are so busy over?" he asked her one afternoon.

"This?" holding up some new work. "It is a shirt for Tom."

"You don't mean to say that you make all the shirts?"

"Partly so. The girls do the plain sewing and hemming at school, and I finish them."

"And you darn all the stockings?"

"Yes. Since my mother died, the sewing has fallen to me."

"I should think your mother was a good woman—judging by yourself?"

"She was, indeed. Good and refined; *how* refined, how good, you can never know. She was a lady born, and displeased her family when she married my father. He was only a farmer."

"I am sorry to have alluded to her—forgive me," was the hasty apology, as he saw the tears in Mary's eyes.

She smiled at him through her wet eyelashes. "Do not be sorry. I like to speak of her. I will show you her likeness some day; it is painted in miniature. She was very beautiful, with a soft, sweet face."

"Just like you, I'll wager?"

"Ye—s," hesitated Mary, blushing violently at having to admit it, in conjunction with what she had just said. "But I can never be half as nice-looking as she was; or half as good."

"You must let other people judge of that," was the answer, given with a significant smile.

And thus, through the lovely days of closing summer, they sat and talked, growing more confidential with one another each day; his tone more unconsciously tender. He had taken to call her "Mary," and had asked her more than once why she would not call him by his Christian name, Francis. Mary, blushing ever, could not, in very shyness, bring

her lips to do it. What caused the shyness? Merely the reticence of girlish modesty—of a well-trained mind? Ah, no; it was something more than that. Mary Owen had learnt to love. This stranger, who had taken refuge within their gates, and of whom they knew nothing, had stolen her heart for all time. Had Tom Owen, who was very fond of fast speech, known the state of affairs, he might have said he would not give a button for old Hale's chance now.

One warm evening, when the whole of the family were sitting on the old-fashioned, capacious benches outside the windows, the stranger appeared unexpectedly amongst them. Tall, worn, shadowy, his graceful figure—and it was graceful—appeared in the doorway. Smiling, hesitating, as if beseeching a greeting, he looked down upon them.

They welcomed him warmly. Moved perhaps by his still wan looks, the farmer started up to give him his arm to a seat; the children buzzed about, eager to help, and put out their hands; all congratulated him on his recovery. All but Mr. Hale. That gentleman said nothing, and, amidst so many welcomers, the omission was not noticed.

Gradually, as if by instinct, the conviction of what this stranger was becoming to Mary Owen had been taking hold of Alfred Hale's mind. She was learning to love him—perhaps he was learning to love her. Had the tutor wanted confirmation of this, he had got it now. He caught the low, involuntary, passionate sound that broke from her lips when Shepard thus suddenly appeared; he saw the rush of crimson to her face, the flashing light of love in the eyes before the eyelids had time to hide them.

Sitting back in the bench corner, Mr. Hale watched everything; his reflections were very much more bitter than sweet. More forcibly and clearly than he had hitherto done, he realised the position of affairs—that this mysterious stranger had stolen from him the heart of his best love. There could be no mistake, none. He watched Mary's frankness with the stranger, and her solicitude for him—that he should have a comfortable seat, that he should not sit in a draught, that he did not feel exhausted and weak. More than this, he watched the manner of the latter with her—that easy yet respectful familiarity of the well-bred man; which even he, Alfred Hale, had not yet attained to. Why, they were as much at home with one another as though they had been acquainted for years.

Mr. Shepard shone to advantage that evening. None could mistake his superiority. He talked as a man of society—and of good society; and charmed them all. The tutor, uneasy both in mind and body, resented it palpably; and Mr. Shepard, detecting this, resolved to take a little amusement out of him, and behaved just as though he had some right of proprietorship in Mary.

How much of this was assumed for Mr. Hale's benefit, of course he could not know. That the stranger, aware of his jealous scrutiny, was

in pure mischief endeavouring to torment him as much as possible, did not enter his imagination. Yet, in a great measure, this was so. Though after a manner in love with Mary's beaux yeux, and inclined to make himself agreeable to her, independently of jealous schoolmasters, there can be no doubt that the presence of the schoolmaster gave a zest to the affair which was highly agreeable to Mr. Shepard.

Nor was this the only cause of offence given that evening. When they went indoors, the farmer asked Mr. Hale for "some music," and the latter produced a flute, with the sound of which Mr. Shepard had already grown wearily familiar. At sight of it he shrugged his shoulders, said a few words aside to Mary, shook hands with her and her father, and wished them all "good night."

But the whispered words and the movement of departure were not lost on the tutor. He rose to his feet with so quick a movement that his chair fell back with a crash to the floor.

"If it's my flute that is driving you away, sir," he said, in a quick, excited voice, "you need not disturb yourself. Mr. Owen will excuse me if I decline to play to-night. I do not wish to make myself disagreeable to anyone: not even to those"—he flashed a glance of wrath and love at Mary—"who take up with new friends and throw away old ones."

"My good friend," said the stranger, with the quiet, supercilious air of a man of the world, "I am sorry that you should construe my departure into an offence to yourself; but it is out of my power to say anything in reply to your observations except—good night!"

"You'll say something in reply to them at another time!" said the teacher, clenching his hand as he followed him into the hall.

Mr. Shepard turned, shortly and sternly, with a gleam in the dark eyes that the other did not altogether like.

"I have but one reply to make to those who are insolent to me," he said, scornfully; "and that reply, I tell you frankly, it will not be well for you to force me to give to *you*! I have no disposition to give it, either. Neither you nor your music can be of the least importance to me, sir. Stand aside, if you please, and let me pass."

Mr. Owen, who had opened the room door, watched him as he went up the staircase.

"What is the meaning of this, Hale?" he asked. "You were quarrelling, were you not, with our guest?"

"He deliberately insulted me. The moment I got out my flute——"

"Nonsense! You took offence where none was given. Why couldn't you let the man go in peace, whether he liked your music or whether he didn't?"

"It was not only the music," replied the angry teacher, who had the great fault of not being able to keep his temper. "It is not *that*."

"What is it then?"

"It—it—it is seeing the way he goes on with Miss Mary—whispering to her, and giving her his arm just to come indoors. You don't know who this man is that you have brought into your house, sir, and I warn you that you had better take care of your daughter."

"Mr. Hale! how dare you?" cried an indignant voice in the rear; and they turned to face Mary, her fair cheeks glowing, her bright eyes flashing. "Whatever my father may choose to say to you, *I* say that you have no right to speak in this manner of me, or of *him*."

"For all we know, the fellow may be a disreputable character," panted the tutor, almost beside himself. "He is not a fit companion for your daughter, Mr. Owen; he has no business to be here."

"If this house were not your temporary home, I should say *you* had no business to be here," flashed Mary, her own temper roused for once. Not for herself; but—how could she hear the slighting imputations upon *him*?

She took her bed candle as she spoke, and went up to her chamber. Mr. Owen, a man fond of peace, looked after her, and then at the angry-faced tutor.

"You have ruined your chance with Mary, young man," he quaintly observed.

"It is not I who have ruined my chance ——"

"Not that, as I believe, you ever had any."

"It is that man who has ruined it," cried the desperate lover, disregarding the interruption. "She has not been the same since he came. She ——"

"Stop!" again interrupted the farmer, laying his hand impressively upon the other's arm. "I refuse to hear more of this. It is true I know nothing of the man, except that he is my guest, a stranger under my roof; but I have perfect confidence in Mary—perfect. You must understand that."

"Many a man has had perfect confidence in a woman, and lived to repent it."

"Be silent, Mr. Hale. You don't, I think, know what you are saying."

"I know that your daughter as good as ordered me out of the house, sir. For the present, I will go. We have a week's holiday at the school, as you know; it begins to-morrow, and I will take it. I have business at a distance."

"So much the better," said the straightforward farmer. "You will come back, I hope, with your temper cooled."

"And I trust, sir, that the next time your daughter finds an honest man to love her, she will treat him a little better than she has treated me."

With this final thrust, Mr. Alfred Hale disappeared for the night. And the next morning he went off for his week's holiday.

"Joy go with him!" cried David and Tom, flinging up their caps. "Father, he has lately been as sullen as a bear."

III.

After Mr. Hale's stormy departure, the time flew on quietly and serenely in the Owen household. Though daily growing stronger and showing himself less of an invalid, the stranger still lingered within their gates, and gave no sign of any intention to leave. "You are welcome to stay with us until you are quite strong and well," Mr. Owen had said to him more than once; for he regarded few things as more sacred than the laws of hospitality.

It might be that the attractions of Mary detained him; it might be that (supposing he had some motive for concealing himself) this out-of-the-way spot of earth was to him as a haven of safety. At any rate, here Mr. Shepard stayed.

And, now that he was amongst them, sitting at their board, just as the sullen tutor had been, they all grew to like him very, very much. With the farmer he conversed on the affairs of the world, so remote from them; David and Tom got him to go fishing and to give them all sorts of welcome information; the three young girls were violently in love with him, and avowed it. But for the mystery that did in a degree surround him, the farmer could have made a friend of this attractive man.

They were now in the delicious days of September. The whole earth in its warm beauty seemed to have put forth its attractions for this especial spot. At least, so thought Mary; as she and her sisters lingered out of doors in the pleasant air, by bush and brake, in the garden pertaining to the house, or under the fine mountains, Mr. Shepard ever by her side. Come what would, no days of her future life could ever bring a similar charm again.

The week passed happily. With the commencement of another, David and Tom went to school again. The tutor had not come back. Instead of that, the master, to his great wrath, received a letter from him, saying that the business he was endeavouring to transact was delayed; but that he hoped to return to his post shortly.

A few days yet went on; days of sweet serenity, of perfect happiness. At least, they were so to Miss Owen. Then came an announcement from the farmer that he should have to go on the following day to the county town, on business connected with his farm. He asked Mr. Shepard if he would like to take the other seat in his gig, and go with him. Mr. Shepard, thanking him for the offer, declined it; and the farmer started the next morning before daybreak.

They did not expect him home until after dark. It was more than a two hours' journey, even for swift Billy. Mr. Owen's visits to the large towns were rare, and when he did go, he liked to make the most of his stay there.

What, then, was the astonishment of two of the girls, Eleanor and Gwendolin, as they sat at work on the bench outside the window in the afternoon, to see their father approach from the direction of the stables: whither he had evidently driven at once to leave his horse and gig. What could be the meaning of his early return?

They asked it one of another, these two simple-hearted girls; but they did not dare to ask it of him. For on Mr. Owen's face lay an expression of gravity, rarely seen there; of intense trouble.

"Where is Mary?" he began.

"Gone over to Niton, papa: to take some cold meat and a few eggs to poor old Jenny Thomas. Is—is anything the matter, papa, that you have come back so soon?"

"Mr. Shepard—is he out also?" returned the farmer, leaving Eleanor's timid question unanswered.

"No, I think he is in his room."

Without another word, Mr. Owen proceeded to his guest's chamber, knocked, and entered it. What took place during that interview was known to themselves only. In a very short while—only a quarter of an hour, as it seemed to the children waiting below—both of them came forth from it. Mr. Shepard had his black valise in his hand, apparently packed for travelling.

"I am very sorry for this," said the farmer, in a low tone, as he held out his hand. "I would not turn anyone willingly from my gates, who has been a guest within them, as you have. But you perceive how it is. Your own safety renders it imperative."

"I thank you with all my heart, Mr. Owen. I am glad you know the truth now: it has sometimes been on my mind to tell it you, unquestioned. Perhaps we may meet again—in another country, if not in this. Should we never do so, believe me you will have my best gratitude as long as my life shall last; my truest wishes for the welfare of yourself and of your family."

"And you have my best wishes, and you know in what way I mean," returned the farmer. "I ought not to say as much; but I do, and I can't help it. You are sure you have money?"

"Plenty of it. Thank you truly for all."

"Eleanor, Gwendolin—bid good-bye to Mr. Shepard," said the farmer, as they emerged from the house. "He is going away."

"Going away!" echoed the girls, stricken aghast. "Oh, Mr. Shepard, will you not come back again?"

"I fear not," he answered with a smile, as he took their hands. And Eleanor, impressionable Eleanor, burst into tears. They had all

grown to like him so much! It seemed to her just then that it would have been easier to part with Tom or David.

The farmer went with him as far as the outer gate, shaking hands with him once again, by way of farewell; and his guest walked away with a quick step. Mr. Owen, shading his eyes with his hand from the sunlight, watched the tall, slender, gentlemanly figure disappear from sight.

"I hope with all my heart he'll get clear away," soliloquised he. "I can't help liking him, in spite of all."

The sun was sloping towards the west, when Mary Owen came tripping along the fields from the poor neighbour she had been visiting, swaying her basket to and fro in her hand in very gleesomeness of heart. This part of the land was extremely wild. On the right, down in a deep glen, lay a mill that belonged to her father. It had always been a favourite resort of hers, it was so quiet and solitary; and many a time, during these few last golden days, had she and their stranger-guest sat on the green bank under the thick trees there, listening to the sound of the rushing water-wheel. But the mill was not at work to-day, and was deserted by the men.

She ran down the narrow path, intending to pass it, and ascend the wild, rocky path on the other side on her way home. Perhaps some latent hope whispered to her that *he* might have strolled as far this sunny afternoon. Yes! there he was. He seemed to have been sitting on the shady bank waiting for her; but he stood up as she came in sight.

Flushed, smiling, glowing with beauty, Mary ran lightly down. It was only when she reached him, and saw how pale and resolute he looked, that she felt surprised. For the warm, glowing welcome she was accustomed to was neither on his countenance nor tongue.

"I am glad that you have come!" he said, taking her hands. "I feared you might not. I thought you might be staying till night with Jenny Thomas, the old woman you went to see."

"Nay, I promised that I would be home for tea," she answered.

"And do you always keep your promises, Mary?"

"Always," she answered, blushing under the intent gaze. "At least, I try to do so. I am sure I have never broken one to you. Have I?"

"Never as yet," he answered. "But"—here a curiously hard look settled on his face—"I may put you to the test now. Sit down. I did not think it would have had to be quite so soon. Mary!"

She looked up at him in silence: awed at the sharp, solemn tone in which he spoke the word.

"Last evening, when we sat in this very spot, and the children were scampering up and down the break-neck path here, I asked you to be my wife when circumstances permitted, and you promised that you would be."

"Provided you could get my father's consent," she timidly answered, reddening much.

"Just so. But, Mary, I want you to fulfil your promise without his consent. I want you to trust to me wholly."

"What do you mean, Francis?"

"Before I tell you exactly what I mean, you must hear a sad tale. Listen. Your father has just heard it. I will make it as brief as possible.

"There lived a banker in a handsome and populous county town. He was a rich man. He had no children: but he made almost a son of a nephew, educated him extravagantly, sent him to college, supplied him well with cash, and then took him into the bank's counting-house. The young man went the way of many other young men who are thus reared: he got into debt and trouble. Tempted by one evil companion, he made use of money belonging to the bank: or, rather, *made* money by pledging a deed or two that belonged to it. The nephew had intended to redeem and replace these deeds before anything could have been discovered. But, like many another, I suppose, in a similar strait, he found he could not. Discovery came. Unfortunately not by the banker himself; he was gone abroad for his failing health; but by his partner—a plodding old curmudgeon, who disliked the nephew. The young man had to fly; to fly, to avoid being taken for the crime; and he got away safely. Have you followed my story, Mary?"

"Yes," answered Mary, her cheeks and lips perfectly bloodless. "What—was—his name?"

"The young man's? His name was Francis Shepard Stanley."

A long, terrible pause. Mary's beating heart seemed as if it would burst its bounds.

"You understand all too well now, my darling. This afternoon your house was surprised at the early return of your father, who came at once to my room. When he reached his destination this morning, and was going about his business in the town, here, there, and everywhere, he met that good tutor of our acquaintance, Mr. Alfred Hale. Mr. Hale had just arrived in the town also. His business, it seems, during his absence has been to ferret out who I am and all about me."

A groan of dismay broke from Mary's lips. Her companion gathered the hand, he held, closer into his.

"My gentleman was longer over his work than he hoped to have been, wanting the clue: for he did not know my Christian or surname, and my second baptismal name, Shepard, which I really have never used, did not appear in the public advertisements about me. However, Mr. Hale succeeded, and has set my enemies on my track. Some local warrant, or backing of a warrant, was required, it appears, before they could pounce upon me; and that was to be obtained in the county town in course of this morning. All this Hale triumphantly told your father. He, good man, listened quietly, said nothing, but

made his way back to his inn, and drove galloping off to warn me : he could not do otherwise, he said, by one who was his guest, though it was a wrong thing to do, and he might get into trouble over it were it known. Which it never will be, Mary : for you and I alone will ever be cognisant of it. And now you know all."

"And you have left our house to escape?" she gasped.

"Just so. If I can succeed, all will be well. My intention is to make my way as swiftly as possible to a town on the coast : marry you there, if you will come with me, sail abroad directly, and remain in private until the matter is settled. I am certain my uncle will take steps to settle it and free me the instant he returns. His illness has been so great that he could not even be told of the trouble. Will you go with me, Mary?"

"I don't understand you," she faintly gasped.

"Will you go *with* me, trusting to my honour to protect you, as I would a sister, on what must be a secret flight? Or will you follow me to the town we shall fix upon—I think it must be Liverpool—join me there, and be married before we sail?"

"I cannot do either. Oh, Francis!"—with a burst of agony—"you ought not to ask me. Without my father's consent I will never marry even you—and you must know that he would not give it. He has gone out of his way to warn and save you, and I can hardly understand his doing it : but he is full of stern probity."

Mr. Stanley—we will give him his true name at last—compressed his pale lips.

"Is this your true decision, Mary Owen?"

"Heaven knows that it *has* to be—that I have no alternative."

"And yet you have professed to care for me!"

"Professed!" she echoed—the only word catching her ear.

"You are ready to send me alone into exile, not caring whether I live or die?"

The accusation was bitterly unjust—and she felt it to be so to her heart's core. "Knowing all this," she said, "why did you seek my love?"

"Things will be made straight," he answered.

"And with my father? We have compared him sometimes to some of those old Scotch Covenanters—who, in their uprightness, never forgave a sin."

"It seems I was mistaken in you, Mary."

"No, no," she answered, with a great sob. "But—how can I do this thing that you require of me?"

She looked at him imploringly, her hands clasped in pain, her face up-turned. The trial was almost more than she could bear. Mr. Stanley strode about on the narrow path before the seat.

"You are like all women, Mary. I thought you were different—"

better. I thought you loved me well enough to entrust yourself to me ; to be my companion in exile—my own dear wife."

His voice softened, his face melted as he spoke, and the girl's heart leaped with a mighty thrill. For an instant she wavered : her heart did ; not her judgment or her rectitude. Opening his arms he drew her face to his.

"You must decide *at once*, Mary. I have not a minute to lose. Already I have thrown away an hour of the precious time that ought to have been given to making good my escape, in waiting here for you. My love, will you not go with me?—will you not trust all to me? Believe me, I will never fail you. Surely you will not send me away alone!"

"I cannot go, Francis," she sobbed, amidst her raining tears. "I cannot, will not leave my father and my home clandestinely : and, as I say and you must know, from him there is no hope. Oh, it seems that I would rather have died than had to bear this cruel pain!"

"Then we must part!"

"Yes, we must part. And, oh Francis, my best beloved—I dare to call you so in this closing hour—let us part now ; this moment ; do not delay longer. Your liberty——"

"Perhaps in future, Mary," he interrupted, looking straight into her eyes, "if matters turn out well, we may yet meet again. And your father——"

A cry escaped her. Some movement on the opposite heights had caught her eye, and she knew that his pursuers were close upon him. Instinctively she drew him back into the thick trees, and they were both concealed by their shade.

"They are there," she whispered.

"Yes. No time to lose, indeed. I don't think they saw me."

But how was he to escape? If they came down into the glen, all was over. Two or three men were there, Mr. Hale one of them.

"Fortunate that they don't see my valise," whispered Mr. Stanley. "I lodged it just within the shed yonder."

"If they would only go away!" breathed Mary, in an agony ; "go off on any of the roads—you might escape yet. There's one of them looking down!"

They hardly dared to breathe. They stood there, holding one another, as if for safety : at least, he held Mary. At that moment there occurred a tremendous crashing and crushing on this side, just above them : somebody was tearing down straight-foremost, without taking the trouble to seek the path.

"Farewell, my best and dearest," he whispered, his lips clinging to hers ; "they shall never take me with life."

But the intruder was not a Bow Street runner, if the appellation may be used yet, but only Tom Owen. Tom Owen, being light and lithe

of limb, rather preferred the perpendicular way of getting down precipices. Mary, catching him by the jacket, to his intense surprise, whispered a confused explanation in three or four brief words.

"He has been a guest within our gates, Tom. We must not let him be taken, if anything we can do will save him."

"Taken! Of course not," responded Tom, warmly earnest, but quite bewildered. "We'll save you, Mr. Shepard. I'll throw those ruffians off the scent. And that rat of a Hale, too, to have done it!"

"Take care, Tom, my boy. You may do me more harm than good."

Away rushed Tom to the front, crashing through the trees. The three gentlemen on the opposite bank looked down at him like so many hyenas.

"Halloa!" roared Tom, looking up. "Why, that's never you, Mr. Hale! Glad to see you back again—but won't you just catch it from the master! He has had to hear our Latin homily this week—and you know he *can't*. I say, have you seen anything of Mary and Mr. Shepard? They went off to Treffyn this afternoon."

"Went to Treffyn this afternoon?" called back Hale, his voice echoing down the glen, sounding almost close to his trembling listeners' ears.

"The pair of them," shouted Tom. "It strikes me that's a *case*, you know, Mr. Hale. Don't know what will be said to it at home."

"How did they go? Which way did they take?" panted Hale, the information nearly stopping his breath.

"Went on Shanks' pony, and took the road by the old mine. It's the furthest, you know, but the shadiest, and they'd be sure to like *that*. Here, you just wait there till I come up and get round to you, and we'll go and meet them, if you like. Mary will be glad to see you after this long absence."

"We'll go on at once," replied Hale, "you can catch us up."

The three peering faces disappeared from the opposite bank like a shot. They had taken the bait. Tom Owen turned to crash up the bank again through the trees and brushwood, in order to overtake the men of law and keep up the farce. Mr. Stanley seized the hand of the ready-witted lad.

"Thank you, Tom; thank you ever. Should I escape I shall be your grateful debtor always."

"Don't lose time," whispered Tom in return. "Get out of this wilderness, and take the way to the left—you know. That's just the opposite direction to Treffyn, and you'll get across country and dodge them nicely."

A loud shout proclaimed Tom's arrival at the top of the bank. Making his way round the brow of the precipice, he saw the three hastening along towards the Treffyn road, and proceeded to catch them up with all the speed of his active legs.

"Not a moment to lose," whispered Mary, from amidst her sobbing breath. "May God speed you on your way!"

Wringing her hand with a sharp pressure, leaving his farewell upon her lips, and a few words of comfort for her heart, Francis Stanley caught up his valise, and was gone.

The stars had long been shining, and all the inmates of the house, save the farmer, had retired to their chambers, for he sent them up early, when Mr. Hale, and the would-be capturers, and Tom, arrived at the door, having cooled their heels on the Treffyn road.

"Not here again; never again, Mr. Hale," spoke the farmer, with dignity, spreading his hands to bar the tutor's entrance. "You would have betrayed my guest—one living under the same roof with yourself. Hush! Justified, you say? It may be; I enter not into the question. He is nothing to me, and his doings are nothing to me; but he was a partaker of my hospitality: you have betrayed that, and I can never receive you here again. Henceforth we are strangers."

"Father," called out Tom, while Mr. Hale stood in silence and mortification, "has Mr. Shepard got back yet with Mary?"

"No," spoke the farmer, sternly.

"Then," said the ready lad, turning to his companions, "you may depend it is as I said—that they are staying at Treffyn till to-morrow. Most likely at old Mother Llewellyn's: she has taken them to the play, I shouldn't wonder. They'd have been here long before this, you know, had they meant to return to-night."

"Come in, Tom," said the father, sternly, "that I may bar the door. Shepard here?"—to a question of the officer. "No, sir! I have told you that he is *not* here. I tell you no lie: ask your friend Hale whether I am to be believed."

Tom slipped in. Mr. Owen shut the door and bolted it, leaving the baffled men to watch the house outside, or to wend their weary way to search Treffyn, as might seem good to them.

And that was the ending, so far 'as the Owens were concerned, of the stranger who had sojourned with them. That the erring but attractive young man, Francis Shepard Stanley, made good his escape there was no cause to doubt; since neither from the newspapers nor any other source did they hear aught of his capture.

Would he ever return, a free man, to claim Mary? It was more than she dared to look for. But her future hopes, her heart's best life, had gone out with this stranger, when he went forth from within their gates.

DUKE RUTHERFORD.

IT was a fair, sunny day in August. They were out on the cliffs, fathoms above the sea, at play. She a dark-eyed, wondrously beautiful girl of thirteen; he a tall, stalwart boy a year her senior. There was a wide difference in their stations in life. You had only to note the richness of her silk attire, the threadbare scantiness of his, to feel assured of that. No rich man's son would have been dressed quite so shabbily as Duke Rutherford: and yet, in spite of the worn-out clothes, the boy, in beauty of form and feature, might have been a fit son for a nobleman.

The children were gathering mosses from the rocks and chatting gaily together, forgetful of rank or station. They had met often thus for the last six years.

Duke's father was the agent of the estate of Lucy Delamere's high-bred mother. Their cottage was but a little distance from the Hall, and the children, in search of amusement, wandered out often to the cliffs, and whiled away sunny afternoons in juvenile sports. Duke gathered for his fair playfellow the brightest-tinted shells, and, in return, she brought him musty old books of romance and chivalry from the great library at the Hall, which he read and re-read, until his soul was filled with dreams and aspirations, vague, and sweet, and unreal as the visions of an opium-eater.

The Rutherfords had not always been dependents. Generations back there were noblemen in the family, but political differences had taken title and wealth from the name. Early in life, Hugh Rutherford, Duke's father, had become agent to Mr. Delamere; a post he had retained when Mr. Delamere died, leaving a widow and one only child, a girl, as sole heiress to his vast wealth and estates. Hugh Rutherford had married a young wife, beautiful and refined; but after a few years their singularly happy life was broken. Mrs. Rutherford died, and her husband had only his six months' old boy to toil for.

No restraint was put upon the intercourse between Duke Rutherford and Lucy Delamere by the proud lady mother of the young heiress. If she thought of the matter at all, she trusted to the inborn pride of her daughter, and to the cold contempt she had tried so faithfully to imbue her with—contempt of all that was low-born or ill-bred. Mrs. Delamere would never have thought of looking for a princely heart beneath the rough jacket of one she considered too far beneath her to merit even the tribute of a passing thought.

The sea breezes gave a beautiful bloom to the cheek of Lucy; and

the sports she shared with Duke rounded her limbs and gave grace and vigour to her step. Mrs. Delamere read her favourite novels, entertained her chosen company, and reigned queen at the Hall; and Lucy enjoyed the wild freedom of the cliffs.

The young girl was almost reckless in her daring at times. This afternoon she was in her most dangerous mood. A cluster of flowers, growing in a cleft of the rock below the surface of the cliffs, attracted her attention. She sprang towards them. Duke waved her back.

"It is perilous, Lucy," he said, hurriedly. "Look at the black rocks beneath. A single mis-step, and ——"

"I am no coward," she laughed, defiantly. "If you are pale, I am not; and I am going to carry these bright things home to mamma."

Before he could prevent her, she had swung herself over the precipice; and resting one foot on a narrow shelf of rock, her left hand clinging to a frail shrub that had taken root in the sparse earth at the top, with the other she grasped the coveted blossoms.

Duke, white and rigid, stood above her looking down. She shook the flowers above her head. "See! I dare do what a boy trembles at seeing done!"

She stopped hastily in the gay, taunting speech she was making. The treacherous rock under her feet crumbled and fell—there was only that little swaying shrub to hold her back from eternity.

Duke threw himself upon his face, reached over, caught her uplifted hands in his, and drew her up slowly, laboriously—for she was nearly his own weight, and he realized too well how much hung on the result to be hasty or reckless of his strength. He rose to his feet, lifting her up with him. For one moment, breathless and overcome by the thought of what she had escaped, she leaned against him; then turning away she seated herself on a rock.

"Oh, Duke!" she cried, pale with the terror of her late danger, "you have saved my life! What will mamma say? What can I give you as a keepsake, to show how grateful I am?" And she began to detach the heavy gold chain she wore at her girdle.

The boy's face flushed proudly as he put it from him.

"Give me the bunch of heliotrope in your hair," he said. "I want nothing else."

She pulled it out and laid it in his hand.

"You will throw it away to-morrow when it is withered," she laughed.

"No; I shall never throw it away!"

The day was setting in steel-blue clouds; great banks of them obscured the setting sun. From the troubled sea vast masses of drenching fog swept up the rocky coast and settled heavily down on the land.

That night Mr. Rutherford called Duke into his bed-chamber, where

he kept his private desk and his meagre store of books. He took from an ebony casket a ring set with large diamonds.

"There, my son," he said, "this is the only thing I have on earth to show that noble blood flows in our veins. That ring belonged to my great-grandfather, the Duke of Somerton. It cost one thousand pounds. It will bring readily more than half that sum. I give it to you. Will you keep it to show the world that your ancestors were nobles—or ——" He paused and looked into the face of the boy.

"Or what, father?" Duke's face was eager, hopeful; already he had half divined his father's meaning.

"You love books, Duke. I had thought you might desire an education. The proceeds of that ring will defray your expenses at school—maybe help you through college. But you can keep it if you choose. Which shall it be?"

"Father! knowledge before anything else in this world! What care I if my body starve, so that my mind be fed?"

So it was decided. A fortnight afterwards Duke left Romney and entered the renowned school at C——.

Six years passed. Duke had been six months at college and was home on a brief vacation.

Miss Delamere had completed her education and come "out": a wonderfully beautiful and accomplished young lady, followed by a train of obsequious admirers.

One still July night she stole away from the revelry at the Hall, and went, as of old, to the cliffs: to the very spot where Duke Rutherford had saved her life. Chance had taken him that night to the same spot. He was sitting silent in the moonlight, looking out at the sea, thinking of that bygone day when she had given him the heliotrope for a keepsake. All these six years the heliotrope had been kept by him as his greatest treasure. Her image had been ever present with him, spurring him on to exertions in his studies, making every fresh victory, every upward step, a triumph for her sake. And yet he never asked himself why this was, or what it would end in. It was so, and he could not help it. But he felt that to aspire eventually to the hand of Lucy Delamere, the richest heiress in the county, the daughter of one of the proudest women in England, was as hopeless an aim as an attempt to grasp an ignis fatuus.

He heard her step—perhaps the thrill at his heart told him who was coming. He rose and turned towards her, waiting her pleasure. She might recognize him or not, just as she chose.

She passed him with a haughty glance. He did not flinch, but stood with folded arms—his tall, manly figure outlined against the purple sky, his face lit up by the young moon. A faint flush rose to her white forehead.

"Is it Duke Rutherford?"

"Miss Delamere? Will you not welcome me home?"

She gave him her hand. After all, old memories held still their sway in her heart.

Some secret audacity moved him to say it. He bent over her and whispered—"I have the heliotrope yet, Lucy."

Her eyes blazed; she snatched her hand from him as if his touch had stung her. "Remember to whom you are speaking!" she said, sharply. "I have other business than listening to the silly talk of a love-sick boy! Good night to you, Mr. Duke Rutherford."

Duke gazed after her as she hastened away.

"The time may come," he muttered, "yes, it may happen that she will be glad to unsay those words! I can wait."

Six years passed again. Duke Rutherford was making a name in the land. On his graduation he had studied law, been admitted to the bar in due time, and after two years was in successful practice, one of the most rising men in his profession.

Wealth came to him slowly, but fame was not chary. He had turned his attention and his leisure moments to literature, and already ranked high as a poet. His father was dead. There was no tie, save memory, to bind him to the old place at Romney. So he travelled, when he could do so with benefit.

He frequently met Lucy Delamere in the gay world. Their old familiar footing of early days had given place to a colder and more distant acquaintanceship. He could not forget the hint he had whispered to her respecting the heliotrope that hot July night. Her pride had taken alarm, yet to him she was and ever would be the one woman the world contained. His heart never for one moment swerved from its passionate allegiance. And she? What meant that frequent absence of mind, that dreamy look in the beautiful eyes, that constant look of sadness on the exquisite face? What meant that sudden flush, that lighting up of the features at the first moment that his name was announced on entering a room? Were love and pride having a battle? It would seem so, for on his approaching her the light and the flush would die away, and a cold, proud word would be his greeting.

Suddenly it was announced that Mrs. and Miss Delamere were going to America. An illness had attacked the elder lady, and a sea voyage was recommended by her physicians as her only chance of recovery. They had advised Australia, but to this she would not listen; so long a voyage seemed to her like bidding farewell to earth. She resolved to try the efficacy of a trip to New York.

The news reached Mr. Rutherford amongst others, and startled him. Could he make use of this opportunity? For some time past a certain matter of business had demanded his presence in America, but he had

been unwilling to devote the time to the journey. It was now the commencement of the long vacation, and, so far, circumstances were in his favour. As he thought of the long and close proximity to Lucy Delamere this voyage would give him, and of what it might bring about, his heart leaped with hope and his face flushed as the blood coursed more rapidly through his veins : for the Duke Rutherford of bygone days, and the Duke Rutherford of the present, to whom the highest honours of his profession were possible of attainment, were two widely different men.

So it came to pass that one day he found himself on board a steamer bound for New York, and Mrs. and Miss Delamere were amongst the passengers.

The second day of the voyage they were all on deck at sunset, promenading, laughing, chatting, enjoying the fresh breezes. More than ever, as Mr. Rutherford gazed from a distance at Lucy Delamere, he confessed that her youth had not made false prophecies of the glory of her womanhood. Her wealth of dark hair rippled away from her broad white forehead ; her eyes were deep and fathomless as some woodland spring, into which the sunshine never looks ; her lips red, ripe, perfect ; her whole air and bearing were full of haughty grace.

She was leaning on the arm of a tall, proud-looking man ; but, though she smiled at his soft nothings, she was gazing out, over and beyond him and his range of thought, to the sea stretching so darkly blue and boundless to meet the twilight glory.

Duke Rutherford stopped before her just as she disengaged herself from her companion.

"It is the same old ocean which we used to look at from the cliffs, Miss Delamere," he said, quietly.

She was leaning over the side of the vessel, looking down at the water. She lifted her eyes, shuddered slightly, and drew up her shawl. Duke assisted her.

"It is like going back to my lost boyhood to see you," he continued. "I ——"

She stopped him with a haughty gesture. Her late companion approached. He was a stranger to Mr. Rutherford, and she introduced them to each other—"Sir George Trevor, Mr. Rutherford."

They bowed coldly. They would never be any better acquainted. There was nothing in their natures which would assimilate.

After this Miss Delamere and Mr. Rutherford never met alone. Whether she was afraid of her own strength if brought too much into contact with his winning presence ; afraid that her pride would have to give way to the dictates of her heart, cannot be known. Certain it is that she allowed him no opportunity of pleading his suit.

The voyage was drawing to a close. They were nearing the end. A great storm arose ; the vessel was driven far out of her track, and

drifted down to the Cape. One dark, direful night, in spite of skill and frenzied effort, the ship struck the rocks of a lee shore, and parted !

A little moment, to realize the dread horror of their situation, only was left for those on board. Miss Delamere, pale, but calm, was holding the arm of Sir George Trevor ; her friends, shrieking and terrified, stood near. She was not looking at the threatening destruction before her, but over her shoulder with a hungry, wistful something in her eyes, as if she forgot what she saw not. The expression died out as Duke Rutherford appeared ; for an instant their eyes met. In that moment he knew he was beloved with a wild fervour even equal to his own.

Then there was a dull plunge, a wild shriek of agony, and the water swarmed with struggling human beings ! The world had grown dark to Lucy, but she felt herself borne up by some power beyond her own strength—upward and onward through the billows, till her feet touched the firm shore of the Cape. Then, into the light and warmth of a fisher's cottage, and when they had laid her down on the rude settle she opened her eyes, and saw—Duke Rutherford.

"You saved me?" she asked.

"I had that honour."

"And my mother?"

"She is saved also."

The door opened, and Sir George Trevor appeared. Whatever Lucy might have said by way of thanks, was checked by his entrance, and directly afterwards, Duke went out. A few days later on, a vessel from the Cape conveyed amidst other passengers, Mrs. and Miss Delamere and Sir George Trevor back to England. Mr. Rutherford proceeded to New York and accomplished his mission.

It was months before he and Miss Delamere met again, and then it was at the old place on the cliffs at Romney. Mrs. Delamere was dead ; the shock of the shipwreck had proved too much for her, and she returned to England only to die. Lucy had been to visit her grave, and on her return, sat for a moment on the grey, familiar rock to look out on the wintry sea. Her eyes were still wet ; she had been weeping.

Duke found her thus, and seating himself beside her, drew her head down on his shoulder.

"Lucy," he said, "I love you. I defy your contempt. I dare repeat it to you. I love you !"

For a moment it seemed to him that she clung to him, then cast him away, and rose to her feet. And when she spoke, her voice was cold and unmoved. "On new year's eve I am to be married to Sir George Trevor."

Duke started up—seemed about to make some impetuous speech, checked himself, and left her.

And she threw herself down where he had stood, moaning out—
 "Oh, pride! pride! it will be my death!"

* * * * *

It was the last day of the old year.

Duke Rutherford, a stern and gloomy man, was about to bid adieu to his native land for a long season.

He did not wish to breathe the air of the same country with Lucy, and she the wife of another. People are different, you know. Some keep their disappointments ever at heart, others put them eternally out of their reach, in the past. Duke wished to free himself from memory. He had destroyed everything but the heliotrope, and even that should be sacrificed, he said, when the ocean rolled between it and the soil which had nourished it.

It was a dark, moonless night, with prophecies of snow in the air. He shut the door of the cottage where his father had died, and went out for a walk. He avoided the path to the cliffs; he had closed his heart to all dreams of tenderness.

Almost unconsciously he turned his steps towards Delamere Hall. It rose up, a gloomy, massive pile, lighted only by the red firelight at a single window. To-morrow night it would blaze with the lamps lit to shine upon *her* bridal.

He paused to turn back, but something led him on—through the deserted gardens, up to the broad door, which stood ajar. All was quiet. The guests had retired for the night. Only a few tardy servants were up—it would do no harm to glance within.

He stepped to the door of the room where he had seen the light, and pushed it softly open. He saw no one. Still he went on, and sat down in a great lounging chair before the warm blaze. For a moment, he said to himself, he would sit in the chair she had recently occupied; gaze into the dying embers she too had gazed into.

Someone rose from a sofa at the other end of the room. He started up, an apology on his lips, for his audacious intrusion. She—it was Lucy—clad, not in bridal robes, but in sable vestments, and destitute of ornament, came towards him, looked up into his eyes, and let her white hands rest upon his shoulders. "Duke," she said, at last, her eyelids drooping, her cheeks crimson, "have I offended past forgiveness?"

He did not answer: only looked at her. She went on persistently. "I will let the truth speak, Duke. I love you! I have loved you all along! But pride came nigh to being my ruin! Thank God! at last, I have clean hands and a pure heart! I have dismissed Sir George Trevor, and true to myself, true to you, I cast aside all womanly modesty and shame, and tell you that I love you!"

"Lucy," he said, "is this thing true? Is all at an end between you and that man?"

"All—all," she whispered, softly. "For ever."

Duke Rutherford pressed her more closely to him, and left his first warm kiss upon her lips. She had found her haven at last. Love, as it ever should, had conquered pride.

He gathered her into his arms. "And whose are you now?"

"Yours, if you will take me."

And Duke Rutherford forgot his animosity to England, and did not go abroad.



MY DOROTHY AND I.

WE sat together in the dusk, my Dorothy and I,
Not a breeze was in the trees, nor star out in the sky;
We had been talking at our work, but then a silence fell,
Save that her tale a nightingale poured out with yearning swell.

My Dorothy and I are friends : we met five years ago ;
How she was bred and how bestead, the whole wide world may know.
But I learned something that still night—that night we spake no word ;
I know too well to ever tell the tale I never heard.

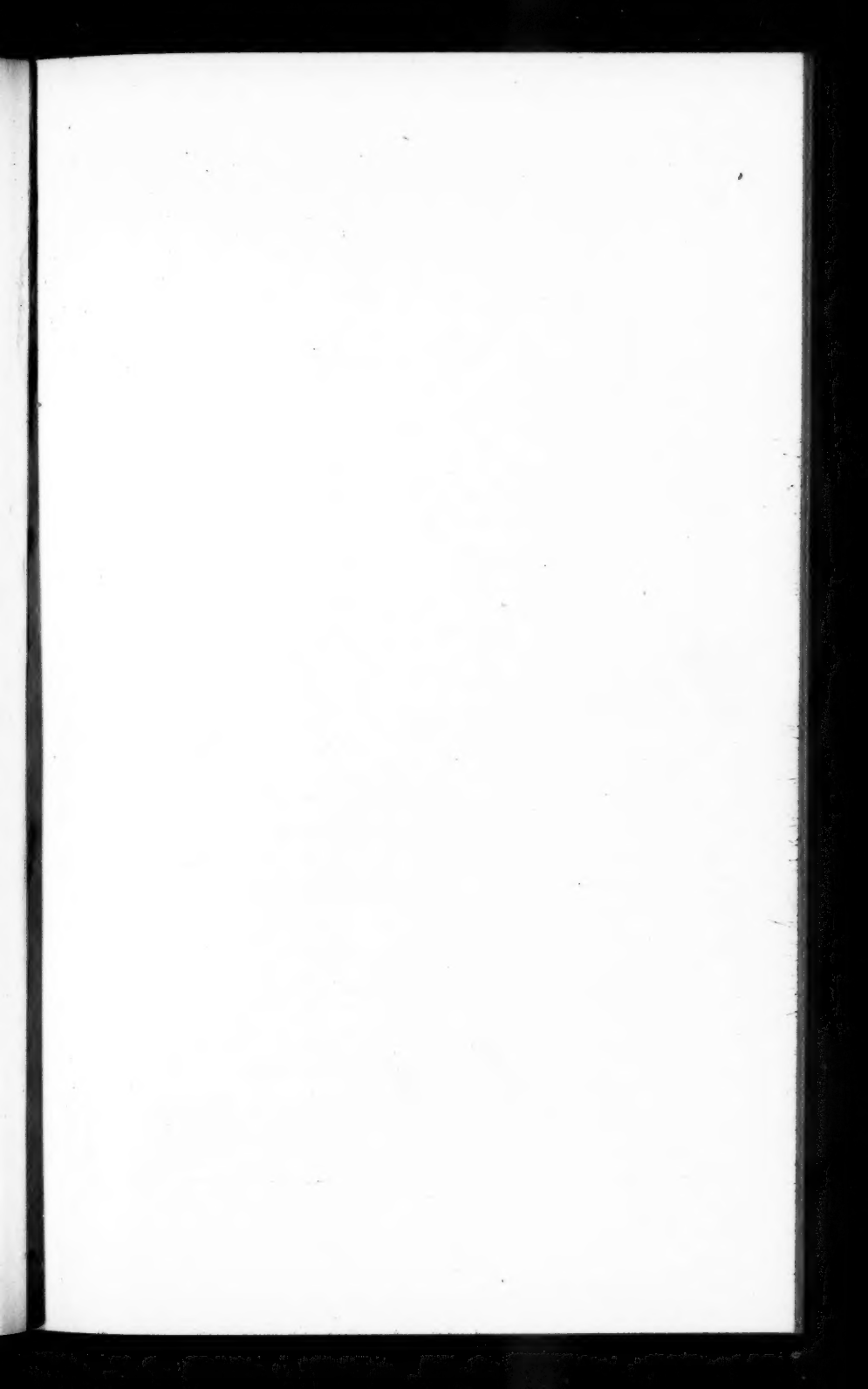
God speaks to us without a voice—our souls are one with Him :
Words are like rain upon a pane that makes the daylight dim.
And by the gladness of the glow He spreads on earth and sky
We know He bears all sins and fears, and knows how they must die.

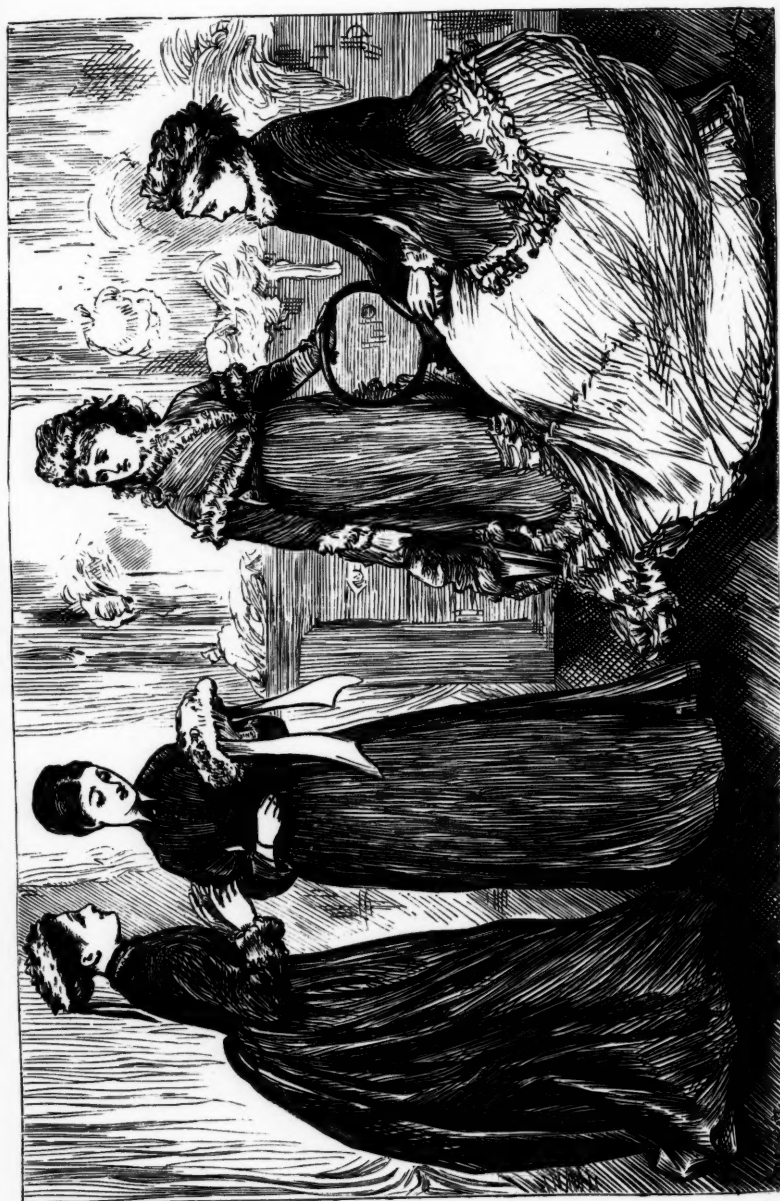
Dorothy's face is keen and strong : her voice is glad and sweet—
Her walk is light as angels bright along the common street.
Dorothy's face that night was calm as theirs who look on Death,
Nor try to hide nor turn aside, nor even hold their breath.

Dorothy's mouth is firmly set, I know the reason why :
Some awful stroke her heart-strings broke, and yet she gave no cry.
I cannot guess to what grim pile her life was ever bound,
But by the sight I saw that night her soul was faithful found.

Strange thoughts half waken sometimes : and I wonder may it be
That angels' books are made of looks whose meanin' angels see.
'Tis an old belief that in a hush the angels ever come—
And love, a flame, may show the name of tales they carry home.

ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.





J. SWAIN.

AT MADAME FRANÇOIS.

M. ELLEN EDWARDS.